

# *Asian Trash Cinema*

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**Li Ching-Hsia** in the lavish Shaw Brothers' production *Erotic Dream Of The Red Chamber*, based on a popular Chinese opera

**\* ASIAN TRASH CINEMA \***

# Asian Trash Cinema

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## Editorial

from CRAIG LEDBETTER

Welcome to the first issue of **Asian Trash Cinema**, the bastard stepbrother of my **European Trash Cinema**. I guess this proves, absolutely, that **Good Trash Knows No Boundaries....**

Inside you'll find reviews for approximately 400 Oriental films, concentrating mostly on Hong Kong, Malasia, Taiwan and Indo China fare. These entries range from Horror to Action, Sexploitation to Sci-Fi. Each review also includes a *star* rating system, \*\*\*\* (best) to \* (worst), which is based on the film's entertainment value and not necessarily on the *artistic* merit. After all, this isn't **Film Comment**.

Even though a hundred or so of these reviews initially appeared in **Naked! Screaming! Terror! #4/5** (1990), they have been updated and, in a few cases, corrections made (we live and learn). They were not simply regurgitated to help fill up space. Plus over 250 new reviews appear here for the first time!

My co-editor, **Tom Weisser**, has penned all the reviews this issue and he deserves full credit for this massive undertaking. However, the next issue of **Asian Trash Cinema** will set the format for the future. Yes, Tom will certainly continue his **The Dead And The Deadly** series, but there will also be articles, reviews, and filmographies from a diverse group of writers, both domestic and overseas, on different facets of **ATC**. And for you fans of Japanese exploitation, don't despair; future issues of **ATC** will explore that market, too. Hell, I'm even going to pen a few reviews....so stick around for all types of excitement.

*Craig*

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# THE DEAD AND THE DEADLY

by Thomas Weisser

A-Z guide to Asian horror and exploitation films

Revised and Expanded

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I have never been particularly fond of *Kung Fu* movies. They seemed too juvenile ("He insulted our school, master!") and too "staged" to be taken seriously. And far too boring for mindless cinema escapism.

Simply, I just wasn't interested. There were far too many European and American exploitation films I wanted to see; so many movies, so little time. And, frankly, I wasn't aware that there were Hong Kong/Oriental films other than the *Chop Suey* variety. For years I ignored the entire Chinese marketplace (an easy thing to do in the U.S.A. where Asian distribution and information was virtually non-existent).

I remember the happy day when I first discovered joys of **Chang Ling's *Wolf Devil Woman***. It was a cold December afternoon in 1985, during a Saturday afternoon blitz of video stores, that I came face-to-face with the unusual ***Ocean Shores*** package. Even though the video tape was stickered as **Martial Arts**, it had been misfiled in the "Horror section" (obviously, the store didn't know what to do with this genre hybrid). And I decided to take a chance. I mean, "What the hell..." Right?

That night, as I watched the movie, dumbfounded, with a group of friends, I kept raving: "I'm seeing it, but I don't believe it!" ***Wolf Devil Woman*** was frenzied cinema. Its vivacious attitude hooked me. I became possessed.

And that was the beginning of a non-ending trek that has, over the years, introduced me to the demented world of **Ho Menga's *Black Magic***, the delirious stunts of **Jackie Chan**, the fierce beauty of **Moon Lee**, **Yukari Oshima**, and **Cynthia Khan**, the exhilarating heroic bloodshed of **John Woo**, plus an amazing array of ghosts, vampires, wizards, zombies, ogres, and God knows what else.

In early '90, **Dave Todarello** agreed to publish a series of my Asian mini-reviews in his fazine, ***Naked! Screaming! Terror!*** Since that time, much has changed. Asian cinema has become the "new favorite flavor" of the video collectors. At last, these films are receiving the notoriety they justly deserve. And nothing could make me happier. It is with much pleasure that I share the following information with you.

**A BETTER TOMORROW (1986)**

director: John Woo

\*\*\*\*

**A BETTER TOMORROW 2 (1987)**

director: John Woo

\*\*\*\*

**A BETTER TOMORROW 3 (1991)**

director: Tsui Hark

\*\*\*

Because of this incredible series, especially #1 and #2, Chow Yun Fat is a major star in Asia (see *Killer*, *City Heat*, *Once A Thief*, etc). And John Woo is Hong Kong's most sought-after filmmaker.

These are gangster films that focus on criminals as heroes, but not in a pandering fashion like the "USA-Scarface-type" films. Rather, these films are Hong Kong's answer to the macho Italian Western, with refreshing emphasis on loyalty and comradeship. Here, the characters live in a bittersweet yet gallant world where violence is the only way of life. In fact, violence IS life.

The conclusion of #2 is staggering (and emotionally fascinating) with its bewildering, blood drenched "body count" that goes on forever. These movies are anthems to heroic bloodshed. They contain the most "over-the-top" bullet spitting, machine gun cracking, blood splattering scenes of all time. In any movie. From any country. Ever.

#3 is a deviation from the first two films, as producer Tsui Hark becomes director; the pace is much slower and the movie takes on a "saga" quality. #3 is actually a "pre-quel" with a Viet Nam setting (circa 1974). (See *The Killer* for a more analogous sequel to *A Better Tomorrow 1* and *2*.) (Hong Kong)

**ACES GO PLACES (1981)**

director: Eric Tsang

\*\*\*

**ACES GO PLACES 2 (1983)**

director: Eric Tsang

\*\*\*

**ACES GO PLACES 3:****OUR MAN FROM BOND STREET (1984)**

director: Tsui Hark

\*\*\*\*

**ACES GO PLACES 4 (1989)**

director: Cheung Kuen

\*\*

**ACES GO PLACES 5:****THE TERRACOTTA HIT (1991)**

director: Lau Karl Leung

\*\*\*

A stalwart series with major emphasis on caper-type adventures and espionage action. At times there are unique SciFi elements (especially in #2), but mostly these films are mad-cap, daredevil escapades usually involving an intricate master plan to steal some mega-valuable artifact. Or zillions of dollars in diamonds. The first three installments have been released in the United States under the Anglo title *Mad Mission* #1, #2, and #3.

Karl Maka, probably due to his unique bald appearance, made a quick name for himself in the Aces films. Later, he co-starred with Sammo Hung in *Skinny Tiger and Fatty Dragon*.

*Aces Go Places #3: Our Man From Bond Street* is a significant departure from the others. Directed by Tsui Hark, this one is a frenzied parody of Spy films in general - *James Bond* and *Mission Impossible* spy films in particular. The Asian regulars Samuel Hui and Sylvia Chang are joined by Peter Graves and a variety of familiar faces, including Richard "Jaws" Kiel and Rotund Harold Sakata (*Oddjob* of *Goldfinger* fame). The plot has our Hong Kong heroes being tricked by James Bond and Queen Elizabeth look-alikes who steal the precious "Star of Fortune." Laudable fun. (Hong Kong)

**ALL ABOUT AH-LONG (1989)**

director: Johnny To (Tu)

\*\*½

Chow Yun Fat won the Asian *Best Actor* award for this film, but the movie tends to be a Hong Kong version of *Kramer Vs Kramer*, as a

successful career-women (Sylvia Chang) attempts to reclaim custody of her son from former lover, Ah-Long (Chow Yun Fat).

The ending is particularly noteworthy for its unexpected downbeat twist. After being reunited with his boy, Ah-Long is unexpectedly killed in a bike race.

(Hong Kong)

#### ALL IN DIM COLD NIGHT (1974)

director: Yao Fengpan

•

A rich landowner has an affair with a girl. She's pregnant, but he refuses to marry her. In fact, on a cold night, the girl and her child go to him for help, but he won't let them inside his house. They freeze to death at his doorstep. The two return as ghosts. They torment him until he finally drowns to death. The entire thing is a tedious bore.

(Taiwan)



poster art for *Angel 1* prominently features Alex Fong, but the real stars are the kick-ass females (L→R) Moon Lee, Elaine Lui, and Yukari Oshima

#### ANGEL (1986)

aka THE IRON ANGELS

director: Raymond Leung/Teresa Woo

\*\*\*½

#### ANGEL 2 (1988)

director: Raymond Leung/Teresa Woo

\*\*\*

#### ANGEL 3 (1990)

director: Teresa Woo

\*\*

Obviously inspired by *Charlie's Angels*, this series features three incredible "special-agent" policewomen, including endearing Moon Lee. It's mostly wall-to-wall, frame-to-frame action with loads of shootings, mayhem, explosions and (of course) "girls with guns."

In Part #1, Yukari Oshima plays the sadistic villainess Madame Su involved in drug trafficking. And she steals the show.

Part #2 is the best of the three entries; the final half hour is an exhausting, roller coaster ride through an amazing display of cinematic violence as the girls "go to war."

The third film is a disappointing venture that relies more on *Bondish*-type gimmicks than the sheer powerful exuberance of the female leads. Forget #3, and see *Killer Angels* instead.

(Hong Kong)

#### ANGEL ENFORCERS (1991)

director: Wong Chun

\*\*\*

Here's another variation on the popular *Angel* motif. This time four Kung Fu babes (one with a very trendy garter holster) try to stop a gang of diamond thieves directly associated with the mob. Lots of excessive gunplay violence and thrilling stunts. Plus the girls look great.

(Hong Kong)

#### ANGEL OR WHORE? (1990)

director: Raymond Leung

\*\*\*

Of course, I know this isn't a great film. Nor even a very good one. But it's still a guilty pleasure. In other words, it's trash and I like it.

Here's the premise: A very evil magician, Hsi Chian, is doing dastardly things. Finally, he's confronted by a beautiful female fighter. She is actually a legendary superwoman known as *Eighteen Virgins* because of her ability to divide into 18 clones, each with specialized fighting skills. However, magician Chian manages to defeat her (them?) in a frenzied battle, but he is also killed in the process.

Switch to the afterlife....

The *Eighteen Virgins* are in heaven; Hsi Chian goes to hell where he tricks the devil (he doesn't consume an amnesia drug) and returns to earth ("With *Eighteen Virgins* in heaven, I can do anything I want on Earth," Chian muses). But a

local vigilante, named Stone Head, and a young prostitute (the reincarnated superwoman in a reversed role, thus the title) eventually stop his reign of terror.

One of the perverse highlights of the film is when the old whore-house madam, training her new prostitutes, puts watermelons between their legs. "If you can break melons with your thighs, then surely you can take money from a man," she cackles. Mmmmm. Not a bad plan....  
(Hong Kong)

#### ANGEL'S BLOOD MISSION (1987)

director: Phillip Ko/Benny Ho

Producer Joseph Lai strikes again! Here's another dreadful composite, the unlikely combination of at least three different films attempting to tell the story of Hong Kong gangster families at war with each other.

The title is an obvious attempt to capitalize of the popular Angel series. And the opening *cast credits* is an illogical Anglicized nightmare with names like Mark Watson, Mike Abbott, Gary Carter, Eric Hopper, etc.  
(Hong Kong)

#### ANGELS MISSION (1990)

director: Chris Li

\*½

A dismal drug-trafficking/white slavery story highlighted only by an undaunted performance from Yukari Oshima. She plays an undercover cop from Japan trying to find some girls who have mysteriously disappeared in Hong Kong. In this preposterous script, her mother is a whore house madam connected with the whole thing. What a coincidence! What crap!  
(Hong Kong)

#### ANGER (1988)

aka TERROR IN A WOMAN'S PRISON

director: Lam Ho Lam

\*\*\*

The (\*\*\*) rating is based strictly on the "sleaze factor" and definitely not on the technical attributes of this film. It emerges as an accidental homage to Jess Franco, with hatchet edits and lots of pan-and-zoom nonsense. But the lurid camerawork adds to the overall trashy effect.

Boss Ho King (looking alot like an Asian Elvis without the gold chains) is deeply involved in the white slavery racket, supplying prostitutes and "thrill kittens" to the seedy underworld. Eventually

three of the captive women lead a bloody rebellion (resulting in bullet-riddled bodies everywhere) and then they join forces with an adventurous detective for the ultimate vengeance which involves an unconventional use for firecrackers.



It's one of the sleaziest with an amazing amount of nudity (especially during a bizarre love dance to the song *Je T'Aime*), bamboo-box torture, cheap sex, and sordid S&M sequences (highlighted by a disturbing male-scrotum whip scene).  
(S E Asia)

#### ANIMATION SEXITATION (1990)

director: Lu Won-Tu

\*\*

While a group of friends are playing *Sexitation* (an Asian adult boardgame similar to *Truth Or Dare* with dominoes), they relate their private sexual fantasies. None of the stories are very exciting but the standouts include one about a man who gets his penis caught in a mousetrap, and another about three nude-girls-with-guns, *Angel* fashion. Some of the vignettes feature X-rated animation, which accounts for the title.

(Taiwan)

#### ARMOUR OF GOD (1987)

director: Jackie Chan

\*\*\*

Jackie Chan has made a name for himself by doing stylized "Police Action" kung-fu films that (mostlly) resemble a televised, stunt-laden "Movie of the Week." This film, however, deviates from his usual fare into a supernatural-thriller-spy-adventure yarn, similar to the *Indiana Jones* series.

The story: Jackie used to be in a rock band called *The Losers* but now he works for an auction house. A former member of the band (now a big pop

star) goes to Jackie for help when his girlfriend is kidnapped. It seems that the kidnappers don't want money, rather they want the valuable "Amour Of God" which Jackie has just secured for a museum auction. Lots of outlandish action follows, including a cannibal confrontation plus monks with machine guns. Overall, it's pseudo diversionary amusement. (Hong Kong)

#### ARMOUR OF GOD 2:

OPERATION CONDOR (1991)

director: Jackie Chan

\*\*\*½

A loosely related sequel to *Armour Of God* with even greater over-the-top FX and breath-taking stunts, especially during the deadly wind tunnel sequence inside an underground Nazi fortress.

The film emerges as, reportedly, one of the most expensive Hong Kong productions of all time. And, yes, it's extravagant in style and scope. But it also borrows far too much from *Indiana Jones* for it to be called original.

(Hong Kong)

#### ASSAULT OF JOYFUL GODDESS (1982)

director: Ling King Ku

\*

This is a very confused (and confusing) story, set in ancient China, about a troupe of traveling performers and a town-general who wants to have sex with the leading actress.

It also has something to do with evil spirits being rejuvenated by placing a doll "face-up" inside a suitcase. Go figure.

(Hong Kong)

#### ASYLUM OF LOVE (1987)

director: Lu Tung-Lo

\*

Somewhere in the middle of this there's a story about ghosts haunting a man who has just returned from the Manchurian marshlands. It all takes place in the 19th Century and he lives in a bizarre castle filled with hunchback men and beautiful women. (Well, kinda beautiful, anyway.) There are some unexpected "X" scenes but none of it is very interesting nor entertaining.

(S E Asia/Singapore)

#### BEACH OF THE WAR GODS (1990)

director: Wang Tu

\*\*\*

This story takes place towards the end of the Ming Dynasty (sometime in the mid 1500s).

Japanese pirates are periodically invading the unprotected Chinese coasts. And the oppressed people live in fear.

Enter Hsiao Feng, legendary Chinese hero and swordsman (played with unflinching machismo by director/writer Wang Tu). He saves the day. Many scenes are staged like a Spaghetti Western, with gritty heroism. And the swordplay is phenomenal. (Taiwan/Southeast Asia)

#### BEAUTIFUL DEAD BODY aka

SPOOKY KAMA SUTRA (1987)

director: Kam Tu-Wong

\*\*

A girl kills herself after being drugged and raped by a sinister warlock named Tong. But, in this instance, death is not absolute. The evil sorcerer breathes life into the young victim and continues to seduce her (in rather boring but decidedly X-rated fashion).

When a good magician threatens him, Tong activates an army of zombies to fight the battle. In the end, white magic triumphs and wicked Tong is defeated. Big surprise, right?

(Taiwan)

#### BET ON FIRE (1988)

director: Tony Cheung

\*\*\*

Cherie Chung (from *Once A Thief*) and Cheung Man (the only pleasant thing about *God Of Gamblers 2*) are two young women forced into a life of prostitution. Mostly, it's a sensitive melodrama about loyalty and *female bonding*. Until the end, when it becomes a graphic ultra-violent revenge flick.

(Hong Kong)

#### BEWITCHED (1981)

director: Gui Zhihong

\*\*

While under an evil spell, a man kills his daughter; investigating police detective also becomes possessed. A good monk fights and defeats the spell. Humdrum amusement.

(Hong Kong)

#### BIG GHOST WAR (1987)

director: Issel Mori

\*\*\*

When explorers steal the *Sacred Crane* statuette from an ancient burial pyramid, all hell breaks loose. A giant scaly monster (resembling *Creature From The Black Lagoon* with biceps) wrecks havoc



on the world. He fights and kills a samurai. Then, after re-animating the swordsman's body, he continues his brutish ways until he has amassed a virtual ghost army.

Eventually, a "white magic" priest gets involved and recruits the aid of good ghosts (in a sequence predating the similar *Night Breed*) to defeat the evil army.

(Hong Kong/Japan)

#### **BIG HEAT (1988)**

director: Andrew Kam/To Kel Fun

\*\*\*½

Produced by Tsui Hark, this graphic blood-and-gore spectacle features an amazing barrage of non-stop mayhem, as Detective Wong (Waise Lee from *A Better Tomorrow*) and his cohorts try to stop a gangster kingpin from importing drugs into Hong Kong.

As Jeff Chun writes in Richard Akiyama's *SKAM* magazine: "Like a vicious sucker punch, *The Big Heat* ambushes its viewers with an incredible display of action and brutally graphic violence."

(Hong Kong)

#### **BIG SCORE (1990)**

director: Wang Ching

\*\*\*

Another ultra-violent cop/action flick, notable for an unusual computer espionage plotline. But, undoubtedly, the dominant attraction is the ruthless gangster "hit squad" featuring an incarnately evil villainess.

Amazingly, at one point, she says: "Short life, huh?" as she blasts a child cowering in the corner of the room. No doubt about it, this is a very nasty woman!

However, the film is seriously marred by an awkward *buddy motif* between the two policemen. It's a contrived relationship that doesn't ring true, cluttered with annoying "comic relief" and unnecessary slapstick.

(Hong Kong)

#### **BLACK BUTTERFLY (1990)**

director: Raymond R. Lu

\*

I admit it, the low rating (\*) is a backlash response. This film begins with stirring promise (almost like a female version of *The Killer*), but too quickly it degenerates into a very predictable, claustrophobic gangster flick. I feel cheated. You will too.

(Hong Kong)

#### **BLACK CAT (1991)**

director: Stephen Shiu/Dickson Poon

\*\*\*\*

An incredibly violent and immensely satisfying film. This is an Asian version of the controversial French motion picture *La Femme Nikita* with some unforgettable scenes. And, ultimately, this story of "a misunderstood nonconformist in a brutal world" emerges superior to the original.

Scientists install a micro chip (called *Black Cat*) inside the brain of a violence-prone girl named Catherine (convincingly played by newcomer Jade Leung) in an attempt to refine and control her fits of rage. Their plan is to turn her into the perfect government "killing machine."



It's a detailed look at how the *system* creates its own brand of madness. Yes, this movie is very strong stuff. It goes straight for the jugular. Perhaps the best example is when her CIA trainer, Brian (Simon Yam), decides to "test" Catherine during a romantic holiday. They stop at a church where she is instructed to kill a just-married bride. And she does so without flinching. Plus, the ending will give you a jolt.

(Hong Kong)

**BLACK MAGIC (1980)**

director: Ho Menga

\*\*\*½

**BLACK MAGIC 2 (1982)**aka **REVENGE OF THE ZOMBIES**

director: Ho Menga

\*\*\*

**BLACK MAGIC 3 (1985)**aka **BLACK MAGIC TERROR**

director: Lawrence Chen

\*\*

Basically, *Black Magic 1 and 2* (aka *Revenge Of The Zombies*) are "black magic vs white magic" movies with totally outrageous elements. There's a warlock with an army of female zombies (brought to life by pounding spikes through their skulls), nests of worms and centipedes multiplying under the skin of a hapless victim, an evil magician who drinks human milk to keep from aging, plus exploding bodies, love potions, crocodiles slit open, fireballs and much more. Both 1 and 2 are groundbreaking entries from the Shaw Brothers production company.

#3 (also known as *Queen Of Black Magic*) is a Filipino/Hong Kong co-production. It's a sequel in name only, the by-product of an Asian distribution deal.

For the true sequel to *Black Magic 1 and 2*, see a film called *Seeding Of A Ghost* (1984), also produced by the Shaw Brothers. (Hong Kong)

**BLACK MAGIC WITH BUTCHERY**aka **BLACK MAGIC WITH BUDDHA** (1989)

director: Lo Lieh

\*\*\*\*

Here is a cheap exploitation film that succeeds totally on that level. Director Lo Lieh must be trying for Hong Kong's *Herschell Gordon Lewis* award, delivering the goods with a very gory version of *Flend Without A Face*.

The story is about two explorers who invade a temple in the dark of a jungle. They find a mummy, remove its brain and return to the mainland. The blood and fluid from the brain is used in *Black Magic* rituals which result in bloody (graphic) murders throughout the city... committed by the brain! Seeing is believing.

Incidentally, director Lieh began his career as an actor. He starred as the villain in the legendary *Black Magic* movies and *Human Skin Lanterns*. (Hong Kong)

**BLACK SHEEP (1988)**

director: Charles Neung

\*\*

This is a stark (yet emasculated) story of a High School gang and their assault against society. Although an attempt toward realism is ventured, the movie never really rises above the *To Sir With Love* sugary-sort-of-message film. This is no *Boyz N The Hood*. (Hong Kong)

**BLESS THIS HOUSE (1986)**

director: Donny Yu

\*\*\*

A good haunted house story, similar to *Tobe Hooper's "Poltergeist."* The FX are enjoyable and the action is swift, especially in the last half hour. Worth the watch. (Hong Kong)

**BLIND SWORDSWOMAN (1982)**aka **BLIND SWORDSWOMEN**

director: L. Titus

\*½

Obviously, this is a variation on the Japanese blind Samurai films, with two blind women in the lead role. It's the story of their effort to retrieve *the Book of Sanho*, stolen by evil dictator, Vita Lee.

Sounds like Tsui Hark's *The Swordsman* (1991), doesn't it? Well, interestingly, it also includes some of the same stunts later used in Hark's expensive production, especially the "candle-flame" gag. (Hong Kong)

**BLIND WARRIOR** (1987)

director: Ratno Timoer

\*\*

So much potential, most of it wasted. The biggest problem with the film is the Blind Warrior "hero." He's incredibly boring.

But on the *plus* side, in typical Hindu/Indo China fashion, there's an (over)abundance of gore. Primarily, severed limbs, squirting blood, and decapitations (at least five, some very unique). And the villain, Radna Parna, is quite good. He's a religious dictator who uses his power to oppress the poor and satisfy his "lust for women." The virgin-sacrificing scenes are top notch.

Incidentally, Barta the Blind Warrior also lumbers his way through a sequel called *The Warrior And The Blind Warrior* (teamed with Barry Prima). (Hindu/Malasia/Indo China)

**BLOOD BATH 23** (1990)

director: Oli Nicole

\*\*\*½

Writer, producer, director Oli Nicole creates a highly unusual Asian thriller here, starring pretty Anna Veyama. She plays a dance teacher stalked by a vengeful escaped killer. Handsome Mok Sin Chung is her boyfriend/cop.

There are, also, a collection of "sex-oriented" subplots (reminiscent of Russ Meyer's *Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls*), however the story is definitely inspired by *bait-and-stalk* films. It's a weird combination, but it works. And it works with a style of its own. (Hong Kong)

**BLOOD DEMON** (1988)

aka *TALE FROM THE EAST: BLOOD DEMON*

director: T. Lem

\*\*\*½

There's a curious attempt to mix *Friday The 13th* with E.T. (!?) A bunch of high-school kids have a BarBQ/camp out (sound familiar?).

They are visited by extraterrestrials, including a vicious super-strengthened monster yearning for blood. There are also some good E.T.s being chased by the brute. However, it's a pair of wacky electricians who make the movie work. (Hong Kong)

**BLOOD MANIAC** (1986)

director: Zu Won-Tsung

\*\*

Cheap. Cheap. Cheap.

Gory. Gory. Gory.

A man brings home his new wife and is faced with an icy reception from his parents. His devil-worshipping brother has recently died, but the warlock's spirit is haunting the house. Soon the man becomes possessed and (somehow) creates a "mental link" with a zombie buried in the backyard (!).

The result is a bloody free-for-all, including an outrageous hand-thru-a-belly segment. The whole thing ends with his wife giving birth to a monstrous fanged-creature that rips its way through her stomach (yes, *Alien* fashion).

The film also wins the "Worst Use Of A Musical Soundtrack" award. A pause button is distractingly pushed everytime there's a line of dialogue. But, honestly, the film is such an abomination even that distraction adds to the fun.

(Thailand/Samonia)

**BLOOD OF THE BLACK DOG**

aka *THE ACCIDENT* (1987)

director: Stanley Tong

\*\*\*½

This movie's attraction relies on its ability to surprise. It begins as "Disney type" fluff showing a tender relationship between a young girl and her uncle; but after a scene with a ritualistic slaying of the family dog, it explodes into an amazing frenzy of ghost and demon terrorism punctuated by a frightening crucifixion sequence. It's a roller coaster ride.

(Hong Kong)

**BLOOD OF AN INDIAN FETISH CULT** (1984)

director: Irno Salko

\*\*\*

Somehow, simple words like "bizarre" and "odd" can't do justice to this outlandish Chinese/Samoan co-production. A cult of Chinese youths, who idolize American Indians, retreat into the wilderness where they build a *Jonestownesque* reservation.

Their religious rituals soon get out-of-hand and, at one point, the priestess "loves" her mate to death (in graphic X-rated fashion). The ceremonies become uncontrollable sado lust frenzies which culminate in an inevitable violent conclusion.

Not for the easily offended.

(South East Asia/Samoan)

**BLOOD RITUAL (1988)**

director: Li Yuen Ching

\*\*

The first fifteen minutes pack a wallop as a gang of delinquents stalk and rape a girl in the dark ruins of an old building. Then, unfortunately, the film regresses into a routine, preachy police drama about how "our youth is turning to devil worship and worse." When a cop is exposed as a member of a demon cult, it's all downhill. Too bad.

(Hong Kong)

**BLOOD SORCERY (1986)**

director: Pan Ling Tong

\*\*½

Two explorers are cursed when they steal a magic jade statuette from jungle natives in Borneo. Lots of gross and gory FX including blood dripping from unusual bodily orifices, leeches swimming around under the skin and, while a man is eating, his dinner turns into a plate of worms. Oriental Voodoo and Black Magic fun.

(Hong Kong)

**BLOODY GHOST aka FUNNY GHOST (1988)**

directed by Yuen Cheung Yan

\*\*\*

A gangster buys two canisters from a witch. Inside bottle #1 lives a female ghost; the spirit of her unborn son is in #2. Meanwhile, a beautiful (but penniless) waitress attempts suicide by leaping from a building-top. Her fall is broken by the gangster's car and (miraculously) she ends up with canister #1. The chase is on.

Eventually the bottle is broken and the ghost escapes to wreck havoc. The evil spirit is destroyed when the heroine drips blood on the small bottle, somehow making the mother-ghost's stomach expand (as if pregnant) until she explodes. By the way, this is a comedy.

(Hong Kong)

**BLOODY SMILE (1980)**

director: Park Yoon Kyo

\*\*

During childbirth, a family sacrifices the life of the mother to save her baby. She returns from the grave and takes possession of another woman to get revenge.

(Hong Kong/Thailand)

**BLUE LAMP IN A WINTER NIGHT (1985)**

director: Yao Funa

\*\*\*

A good, atmospheric, turn-of-the-century horror story with ghosts, vampires, and an impossible love triangle.

(Hong Kong)

**BOOK OF HEROES (1987)**

director: F. Xen-Lung

\*\*

Very talky, with an intolerably slow first half. Things liven up when beautiful **Yakari Oshima** is hired as a body guard for a wicked Japanese mafia boss. Unfortunately, she has little to do until the end when she is exposed as an undercover cop. Forget the movie and watch sexy **Oshima** in action during the final ten minutes.

(Hong Kong)

**BRIDE FROM HADES (1989)**

director: Lucas Xen-Tong

\*

The "Bride from Hell" is actually a jealous "Wife from Japan" who levels a curse on her Chinese husband and his family in feudal China. Slow.

(Taiwan)

**BROKEN HOUSE (1977)****director: Ho Menga**

\*\*½

An early terror film from veteran filmmaker Ho Menga who would later direct many of the Run Run Shaw classics, including *Goliathon* and the *Black Magic* movies.

In this one, a bad kid becomes an even worse adult. As a child, Yun throws acid in the face of his father. And as an adult he kills his girlfriend (with a Coke bottle to her genitalia).

Meanwhile, dad has gone insane. And to prove it, he's stalking and decapitating pretty female victims. Yun's brother puts an end to entire ugly mess by offing them both.

(Hong Kong)

**BRUTAL SORCERY (1986)****director: Pan Ling**

\*\*

A taxi driver gets involved in *Black Magic* after he has a streak of bad luck. Good title; so so movie.

(Hong Kong)

**BULLET FOR HIRE (1991)****director: John Cheong**

\*\*\*

Triad (Hong Kong mafia) hitmen, disguised as cops, kill an American ambassador and his delegation in a very violent gunbattle. A beautiful Chinese bodyguard is the only survivor, but soon she is stalked through the street of HK by the professional killers who fear that she can "finger" them.

(Hong Kong)

**BULLET IN THE HEAD (1990)****director: John Woo**

\*\*\*\*

Sprawling. Intense. Melodramatic. Brutal. Each of these words help to describe this epic tale of loyalty and betrayal from one of Asia's premiere filmmakers (best known for *The Killer* and *A Better Tomorrow #1 and #2*).

This 2 hour (+) saga tells the story of three friends (Tony Leung, Jacky Cheung, Waise Lee) who flee Hong Kong after a gang-war confrontation circa 1967. They escape to Saigon and quickly find themselves in the middle of the bloody Viet Nam war, resulting in a series of absolutely harrowing torture sequences at the hands of the Viet Cong.

Interestingly, a feature player named Simon Yam

emerges as the "star to watch." His portrayal of a Eurasian hitman crackles with intense charisma. (Hong Kong)

**BURNING SENSATION (1989)****director: Chia Yung**

\*\*\*\*

The ghost of a dead TV actress continues to live in the netherworld of television signals. This "wonder woman" (jumping through the television set into a living room!) comes to the aid of a family when they are threaten by a waspish vampirella-type ogre who kills her victims by strangling them with her 6 foot tongue. Amazing, right? And because of the TV motif, there are also some mindboggling musical numbers which add to the excitement.

(Hong Kong)

**CANNIBAL MERCENARY (1983)****director: Hong Lu Wong**

\*\*\*\*

Former Special Forces Sergeant Tony Kong, desperately needing money for an operation to save his daughter's life, accepts a mission taking him into the jungles of Viet Nam again. His orders are to "hunt down and a destroy" an army of vicious blood-thirsty cannibals helmed by a demented war criminal.



Incredibly violent. Extremely graphic. And the final half hour packs a wallop. *Apocalypse Gore*. (Hong Kong/Viet Nam)

**CAPRICIOUSNESS (1980)**

director: Kim Young Hyo

\*

A gambler faking his death, "comes back" as a ghost to scare his wife to death. He then marries her best friend, but his "dead" wife returns to haunt them. Familiar story, wearisome execution. (Korea)

**CENTPEDE HORROR (1988)**

director: Keith Li

\*\*\*\*

There're some incredible moments in this film. An evil priest torments his enemies with insects, especially centipedes. They crawl everywhere, thousands of them. The final twenty minutes are an absolute endurance test. Certainly, nobody will ever kiss the heroine if they've seen this movie! (Hong Kong)

**CHALLENGE OF THE LADY NINJA (1979)**

director: Chuen Yee

\*

The real challenge here is to watch this dung all the way to its conclusion. Kim Penn-Khan looks okay but her Kung Fu shenanigans wear thin in this unremarkable might-vs-right tale. (Hong Kong)

**CHINESE GHOST STORY (1987)**

director: Ching Siu Tung

\*\*\*\*

**CHINESE GHOST STORY 2 (1990)**

director: Ching Siu Tung

\*\*\*\*

**CHINESE GHOST STORY 3 (1991)**

director: Ching Siu Tung

\*\*\*

It's probably true that Tsui Hark is a better producer than director. His best productions (I Love Maria aka Roboforce, The Killer, A Better Tomorrow 1 and 2, and this series, A Chinese Ghost Story, were each directed by someone other than himself.

While it's been speculated that he totally controls his projects (apparently, going as far as re-shooting "unacceptable" scenes), Hark's participation in Asian film more closely resembles the role perfected by Roger Corman in American filmmaking, particularly demonstrated by his willingness to give a variety of competent directors their "chance to prove themselves."

This series is an impassioned creation from director Ching Siu Tung (also see *Witch From Nepal*). It's an adventure-oriented romance that incorporates the classic Chinese "man-in-love-with-a-ghost" motif, but the whole thing seems fresh and original. Actually, this is a brilliantly conceived fantasy featuring two very likable Asian performers, Leslie Cheung and Wang Tsu Hsien. But the real star director Ching Siu Tung and his extraordinary camera work. Breathtaking.

Part 2 is a true sequel. Wang Tsu Hsien (aka Joey Wang) returns as the beautiful ghost *Sian* and Leslie Cheung, once again, is *Ning* the hapless hero. The film begins with the words: *The Story Continues....* and it's packed full of great FX including a giant centipede monster at the exciting conclusion. And the soul eating Tree Devil.



Joey Wang is the beautiful ghost, *Sian*; Leslie Cheung is *Ning*

Part 3 jumps ahead one hundred years. Director Ching Siu Tung centers the story on a new character: a timorous monk (played by Tony Leung, best known for his performance in *A Bullet In The Head*). Ghostly vixen Wang Tsu Hsien and swordsman Jacky Cheung return in similar but decidedly different roles. This installment relies more on detailed characterization and exciting "beginning-and-ending" adventure sequences, but the middle section drags. The story is starting to show signs of wear. (Hong Kong)

**CITY ON FIRE (1987)**

director: Ringo Lam

\*\*\*½

An effective cop/action story, but more importantly, it's a somber (perhaps, gloomy) look at the reckless, tragic life of an undercover detective named Ko Chow.

Co-stars Chow Yun-Fat and Danny Lee play the opposite roles that they would (2 years later) portray in *The Killer*. This time Chow Yun-Fat is

the cop who gets too emotionally involved with his thief/killer quarry, Fu (Lee Sau Yln aka Danny Lee).

(Hong Kong)

**CITY WAR (1988)**

director: Sun Chung

\*\*\*

The lead male stars from *The Killer* and *A Better Tomorrow* are together again in this story dealing with two cop-partners secretly stalked by a now-out-of-prison gangster looking for revenge.

The excellent rapport between Danny Lee and Chow Yun-Fat elevates the film above the tired script.

(Hong Kong)

**CLOSE ENCOUNTER OF THE VAMPIRE (1987)**

director: Yuen Ping

\*

A routine comedy horror film set in medieval China. Nothing new here.

(Hong Kong)

**CLOSE ESCAPE (1989)**

director: Wing Chow

\*½

A routine action/drama about diamond thieves and gangsters distinguished only by Yukari Oshima's brief appearance as a mafia hitwoman.

(Hong Kong)

**CRAZY BLOOD (1988)**

director: Li Siu Wah

\*\*\*\*

This one really pays off. It's a rivetting no-nonsense thriller, not afraid to wallow in the muck. And wallow it does.

Chen is a dedicated social worker who has allowed her job to dominate her personal life. Inadvertently, she neglects her devoted husband Lo-Wei and their young son, Chia-Pu. Although he dislikes his wife's patients ("they're just street trash"), Lo-Wei is tolerant of his wife's *workaholic* situation and he takes the opportunity to develop a strong unity with his son.

Then, Lo-Wei's sister offers to babysit the child while the parents respond to an emergency case. While they're gone, one of Chen's "delinquents" breaks into the house and rapes the sister. During the assault, baby Chia-Pu climbs out the window and falls to his death.

Lo-Wei is over-the-edge with grief. His brain snaps. He withdraws into himself, except at night



another victim of Lo-Wei's insanity in *Crazy Blood*

when he stalks the "street trash," gruesomely killing them, "sending them to the afterlife to keep his son company." It's a sordid sickie, but it's good trash. (Hong Kong)

**CRAZY SAFARI (1990)**

director: Lo Weng-Tung

\*\*\*\*

Holy Shit! What a demented hybrid this film is! A *Gods Must Be Crazy* variation of the standard Chinese horror story complete with hopping vampires and magic spells, set in Africa!

Magical priest HiSing (played by Lam Ching Ying, the sapient hero of the *Mr Vampire* series) accompanies his young ward, Leo (Sam Christopher Chan), to an auction in England where they purchase a mummified vampire. Much to the crowd's amazement, the creature is rejuvenated before their very eyes. However, the priest is "wise to the ways of the undead" and quickly brings the creature under control.

After a short racial-slur-subplot involving jive black delinquents and their attempt to rob the vampire, HiSing and Leo are aboard a plane heading back to their Hong Kong home. Along with the vampire passenger. And a very incompetent pilot.

Midflight, they run out of gas and the airplane goes down in the jungles of Africa. They are separated while parachuting. The vampire comes "tumbling-from-heaven" during a vicious attack against a native tribe by some Anglo diamond thieves. His "arrival" creates such a commotion that the bad guys (including a British bitch in mirror sunglasses) retreat. The vampire is immediately elevated into "village god" status.

Meanwhile, HiSing and Leo are miles away in a thorn bush fighting off lions and a rhinoceros. But, eventually, everyone is reunited in the village.

Then, the evil diamond thieves return to rob the natives. They have brought their own superhuman zombie for the battle. In an especially amazing

sequence, HiSing transfers the *spirit of Bruce Lee* into the native chief (actually played by NiXau, star of *Gods Must Be Crazy*), and through some imaginative trick photography *Bruce Lee* takes on the bad guys!

Bewildering. Audaciously bewildering. One of a kind. What more can I say?  
(Hong Kong)

**CRAZY SPIRIT** (1986)  
director: Chien Yueh Sheng

\*

Lame "Poltergeist" rip-off, with a Buddhist priest trying to exorcise suburban home. Yawn.  
(Hong Kong)

**CRIPPLED HEROES** (1983)  
director: Ling Akuri-Lu

\*\*



**CRIPPLED MASTERS** (1984)  
director: Ho Wang Muri

\*\*

These two movies are essentially made for people who visit carnival Freak Shows. Both films are identical in scope, set in medieval China. They tell the story of two men. One had his arms chopped off by the evil king; the other, his legs. They join together (actually one upon the other's shoulders) to take revenge. Fascinating for about twenty minutes until the novelty wears off.  
(Hong Kong)

**CROCODILE HUNTERS** (1989)  
director: Andy Lau

\*\*

Don't be misled by the title. It's not an Everglades travelogue. Nor a horror film. Rather, it's an "empty" police action flick, saved only by a very good opening sequence dealing with gun-wielding crazies who take over a theatre complex. What a shame that the rest of the movie doesn't measure up to the slam-bam beginning.  
(Hong Kong)

**CURSE** (1987)  
director: Kong Yeung

\*

A young woman named Tu is married to a repulsively disgusting, wheel-chair confined, old man (why the hell did she marry him in the first place? he doesn't even appear to have money!). There is also a repugnant cousin who takes advantage of the situation and rapes her.

But she is really in love with the gardener. When lust-driven cousin murders the gardener, Tu kills herself to join her boyfriend in the afterlife. The story is preposterous and the acting abysmal. Horrors.

**CURSE OF THE WICKED WIFE**  
aka *WICKED WIFE* (1984)  
director: Wong King-Fang

\*\*

A confused tale about twins separated at birth, one lives with a rich family and the other with a poor family.

There's also a subplot involving a vampire, and another subplot about an evil landowner who kills people with "death bugs."

The movie is reminiscent of *Centipede Horror* when the heroine spews up the "death bugs" at the conclusion, but getting to that point is a long and winding road. A very long and winding road.  
(Hong Kong)

**CURSE OF THE ZOMBI** (1989)  
director: not translatable

\*\*\*

A surprising film. Certainly, not great. But definitely a lot of fun.

A young archeologist agrees to a "working vacation." His wife, Zuan, wants to visit her family in the jungles of Thailand. So together with his brother and his brother's girlfriend, they go.

But there's trouble ahead, *Straw Dogs* fashion. A jealous punk named Lo remembers how Zuan had rejected him when they were children. He decides to make trouble for her and her "outsider" husband by convincing an evil magician to rejuvenate a zombie. This creature then kills some of the villagers and Lo tries to blame the foreigners for the deaths. But the village-leader sees through the plot and executes the magician.

Lo retaliates by devouring a bunch of worms, thus he becomes supercharged. In the end, however, he is defeated when a local witch puts an "invincible" spell on the archeologist.  
(South East Asia/Malaysia)

**CYPRUS TIGER** (1990)  
director: Len Wu-Tsui

\*½

Was *Tango And Cash* a big hit in Hong Kong? Well, this one features the same tired story about a clandestine *politically-protected* badguy exposed by two hotshot cops, Cyprus Tiger and Climax.  
(Hong Kong)



**DARAWASA (1983)**  
 director: Tulsí Ramsay  
 \*\*

The goddess Kali gives birth to a werewolf who becomes hopelessly addicted to a serum created by a mad scientist. Sounds better than it truly is. (Hindu)

**DARK LADY OF THE BUTTERFLY**  
 aka **DARK LADY OF KUNG FU (1983)**  
 director: Chang Ling  
 \*\*\*

Chang Ling (star and director), known as Pearl Cheong in the USA (see the *Wolf Devil Woman* series), is Hong Kong's most captivating, enchanting export. This is a combination *Batwoman* and *Robin Hood* story with some delightful fantasy overtones. (Hong Kong)

**DAYS OF BEING WILD (1991)**  
 director: Wong Kar-Wai  
 \*½

Like watching paint dry. Pretty shade, but b-b-b-boring.

It's a rambling story of a heel (Leslie Cheung, the unappreciated *other* male star from *A Better Tomorrow*) and his absolutely shameful behavior toward most of the female cast members, which includes Maggie Cheung and Carina Liu. Director Wong Kar-Wai is recognized as one of the "new breed" of Hong Kong *art* directors, but in this film (and his earlier *As Tears Go By*) he clearly opts for atmosphere with little regards to the story.

Although Tony Leung (one of the standouts from *A Bullet In The Head*) is prominently featured in the credits, but he doesn't show up until the end of the film. Oh well. (Hong Kong)

**DEAD AND THE DEADLY (1986)**  
 director: Wu Ma  
 \*\*

A dead man (played by Asian Kung Fu action/comic actor Samo Hung aka Hung Kam-Bo) allows a ghost to take over his body so that he can get revenge against his murderers. Especially interesting is a segment wherein he escapes detection by transforming into a bug and hiding in his wife's sanitary napkin. Too bad the rest of the movie isn't equally outrageous.

See *Eastern Condors* for one of the best Samo Hung films. (Hong Kong)

**DEAD CURSE (1985)**  
 director: Xen Lung Ting  
 \*\*\*

Although similar in style to the less effective entries like *Blood Ritual* and *Brutal Sorcery*, fast-paced direction and interesting characters make this film one of the better demonic/possession pbs.

A beautiful (but incessantly cackling) witch becomes even stronger after she is killed by a police detective. "I cast a bloody spell on you and your family!" she had cried while dying. Now she is keeping her promise. (Hong Kong)

**DEATH CAGE (1991)**  
 director: Robert Dai/Chen Wen-Sun  
 \*\*

Obviously inspired by the early Bruce Lee movies ("He insulted our school, master!"), this film is a violent remake of *Karate Kid*. It's the Wai Chai Gym versus the Hunter Gym. And the ring is a huge steel cage. Yikes! no one gets out alive! Where's Hulk Hogan? (Hong Kong)



**DEMI-GODS AND DEMI-DEVILS (1985)**  
 director: Chang Shing  
 \*

A rather standard costume action/drama set in medieval China with a few fantasy overtones. Ho hum. (Hong Kong)

**DEMON FIGHTER (1986)**  
 director: Chang Peng-Ye  
 \*

This is more a collection of unrelated (but outlandish) special FX segments than a cohesive film. But (for awhile, anyway) it has something to do with a search for a Jade Horse statuette in Medieval China. (Hong Kong)

**DEMONESS FROM 1000 YEARS (1989)****director:** Patrick Yeung

It begins as a delightful fantasy tale about two beautiful good-witches who escape into the future after stealing the *Bead of Hell* from an evil Demoness.

But, it very quickly degenerates into an absolutely embarrassing sophomoric comedy with an astonishing collection of VERY unlikable characters, especially "pseudo" cool Captain Mento of the Severe Crime Division.  
(Hong Kong)

**DEMONS FROM FLAME MOUNTAIN****director:** Tyrone Hsu (1883)

\*\*½

An impish female spirit (looking a bit like an Oriental Debbie Gibson, God forbid) is banished from Hell by her mother, the queen of Flame Mountain.

The girl-devil causes a litany of problems for Earth folk (i.e., disguised as a giant fireball, she rolls through a village destroying everything in her path) until she is finally reinstated in Hades.

Incidentally, she has the ability to breath fire and, at one point, demonstrates by blowing into the tail of a dog until the animal explodes. Avoid sex with her. At all costs.

(Taiwan)

**DESCENDENT OF THE SUN (1986)****director:** Chu Yuan

\*\*

Hsuan Shu-Shang, a good and holy magician, fights the evil Black Queen for control of the netherworld.

Obviously, he wins. But first we are forced to watch a long and predictable flashback summarizing his mystical life. A lesser film from the Shaw Brothers.

(Hong Kong)

**DEVIL AND THE GHOSTBUSTER (1989)****director:** Lu Twai Xeng

\*\*

A beautiful ghost bent on revenge (she was originally killed while being raped) gives supernatural fighting powers to a Kung Fu boxer in this rather slow, atmospheric, serious film.

There's more-than-the-usual amount of nudity, which mercifully makes it a tolerable cinematic journey.

(Taiwan)



DEVIL AND THE GHOSTBUSTER

**DEVIL FETUS (1985)****director:** Liu Honquan

\*\*

Yes, the scene that everybody talks about features a possessed boy, split down the middle, as a demon jumps from inside. But the film is actually a demented, medieval variation of Larry Cohen's *It's Alive*.

On the "Feast of The Hungry Ghost" a monster rapes the family's mom. She dies, but the possessed fetus lives. For a while, anyway.

(Hong Kong)

**DEVIL HUNTERS (1989)****director:** Tony C. K. Lo

\*\*\*

Irrespective of the title, this is not a horror (nor fantasy) flick, instead it's a good police-action-opus from deft director Tony (*Haunted Madam*) Lo, similar to the many *Angel* clones.

A police-woman beauty (Moon Lee of *Killer Angel* fame) goes undercover to capture a mob boss. Of course, she succeeds.

(Hong Kong)

**DEVIL TWIN (1988)****director:** Tam Ling Chu

\*

An incredibly slow, shot-on-video horror film about two sisters, sort of an Oriental *Juliette* and *Justine*. But, if DeSade were alive today, he would spit on it. Or worse.

(Hong Kong)

**DEVIL YIELDED TO GOD (1984)**

director: Lam Chu-Lung

\*\*

After his girlfriend dies, a young swordsman visits the home of her parents, but they are harboring a big secret. Namely, her spirit.  
(Hong Kong)

**DEVIL'S SWORD (1987)**

director: Ratino Timmoer

\*\*\*

A fantasy film about crocodile-people and a beautiful but evil witch queen who rules them. A winner with cult favorite Barry Prima (also see his *Warrior* series).

And it's one of director Ratino Timmoer's best (*Blind Warrior* and *Return Of The Ninja*).  
(Indochina/Hindu)

**DEVIL'S VENDETTA (1986)**or **DEVIL'S VINDATA** (according to credits)

director: L. Chang-Xu

\*\*½

The devil interrupts a buddhist prayer session. While under a hypnotic trance, one of the priests slices open his chest and pulls out his pulsing heart. The devil devours it, whereupon he transforms into a gorgeous demoness. Heavenly rays suck him/her into the afterlife where she opts to become a vampire and return to earth.

The film is filled with cheesy Asian FX and outrageous transformations. Plus a good princess who took *Pat Benatar* look-alike lessons.  
(Thailand/Hong Kong)

**DIARY OF A BIG MAN (1988)**

director: C. Yun How

\*\*½

Without *Chow Yun-Fat's* ever-growing popularity, this film *wouldn't* have been made. Without his diverse acting ability, this film *couldn't* have been made. But his critics suggest that, maybe, it *shouldn't* have been made at all.

Fundamentally, it's an Asian remake of Blake Edwards' *Micki And Maude* as a man tries to juggle marriages to two different women. And it's pretty funny. But mostly because of *Chow Yun Fat's* comic timing and his willingness to poke fun at his own sky-rocketing career (i.e., a radio announcer reports that "Chow Yun Fat has once again been named the most popular actor in Hong Kong" to which *Chow* mutters: "It must have been fixed").  
(Hong Kong)

**DOCTOR VAMPIRE (1991)**

director: Q. Xen Lee

\*\*\*\*

Here's a very enjoyable tale about vampires (the Western variety, not the hopping kind) with a decidedly decadent overtone, nudity, and a captivatingly romantic plot.

A young doctor from Hong Kong is stranded in the wilderness when his car breaks down. He stumbles upon a house which turns out to be a brothel run by vampires. After being seduced and "drained" by a gorgeous one named Cora, he's sent on his way (memory erased and car repaired).

Later, the evil "boss" vampire is *sampling* blood from his whores when he discovers the delightful "virgin" juices mingling inside of Cora. "This is better than ginseng!" he cries, "bring me this human!"

And so, Cora is sent on a mission to Hong Kong. But after arriving in HK, she falls in love with the doctor (who is now beginning to show signs of vampirism) and the two "outcasts" try desperately to escape the clutches of the bloodsucking pimp.  
(Hong Kong)

**DRAGON VS VAMPIRE (1985)**

director: Lionel Leung

\*

If there's a cohesive plotline, it does not follow any sort of logical progression. An incoherent mess from start to finish. Don't be fooled. Stay away.  
(Hong Kong)

**DRAGON FROM RUSSIA (1990)**

director: Dean Shek

\*\*

The (\*\*) rating is perhaps kind. But the action is swift and the FX are good. Unfortunately, the irritatingly confusing story leaves much to be desired.

Loosely based (very loosely based) on the Japanese comic book *Crying Freeman*, this one tells of a secret clan, *Eight Hundred Dragons*, whose members hunt down and assassinate "untouchable" criminals all over the world. Starring Samuel ("Aces Go Places") Hui as Yao, the clandestine hitman.  
(Hong Kong)

**DREAM LOVERS (1986)**

director: Chen Ching Lo

\*\*\*\*

A musical composer played by *Chow Yun Fat* (see *A Better Tomorrow* and *The Killer*) is haunted by the ghost of a girlfriend from a previous life. It

seems that she expects him to keep his promise of "eternal love," even through reincarnation. Surprisingly, he does. He breaks up with his long-time (and loyal) girlfriend, but in a very somber scene ("Whether 2000 years or 9 years, it's still love") she kills herself.

Truly unique story, plus there are some very steamy love scenes in this poignant film.  
(Hong Kong)

#### EASTERN CONDORS (1986)

director: Samo Hung (Hung Kam-Bo)

\*\*\*½

The *Dirty Dozen* theme, Hong Kong style. Probably the best of the Samo Hung films, this action/adventure flick tells the story of death-row convicts sent into Viet Nam to recapture an Army Base. The final twenty minutes are among the most over-the-top, balls-to-the-wall finales in Asian cinema. A good introduction to the genre.  
(Hong Kong)

#### ELUSIVE SONG OF THE VAMPIRE (1987)

director: Takako Shira

\*\*

This movie ranks high on the "wacky" scale; unfortunately it is also severely disjointed and dreadfully inept. But, frankly, there's a lot to be said for "wacky." It's the story of a man (in ancient China) who discovers that his home is haunted by

four hopping zombies. He enlists the aid of a Kung Fu sorcerer to get rid of them.

Meanwhile, the transvestite king has stolen the soul of the castle priestess (while he was making love to her) and he refuses to return it until she can replace it with the soul of a male virgin. She eventually finds the man (who is still having zombie problems) and she removes his soul. But he isn't a virgin for long, because they fall in love and they are "attracted" to each other. So the priestess, the man, and the Kung Fu sorcerer all join together to fight the transvestite king.

Wow, huh? What about the vampire mentioned in the title? Now that's a good question.  
(Taiwan)

#### ENCOUNTER OF THE SPOOKY KIND (1981)

director: Samo Hung

\*\*

A woman is cheating on her husband; her lover invokes the Monkey King and other spirits to eliminate the husband. But the wronged man survives to beat the unfaithful wife. Interesting ingredients, problems in conversion.  
(Hong Kong)

#### ENCOUNTERS OF SPOOKY KIND 2 (1991)

director: Samo Hung

\*\*

Ten full years after the first one, Samo Hung directs *Part 2*. As one might expect, it's really not a sequel at all.

Instead, this is the story of a transient named Po (played by Hung) who tries to help "a little girl ghost" become a real person before her "senile mother discovers that her daughter is dead." When all else fails, Samo shows off his Kung Fu. At least that makes up for the lame story.  
(Hong Kong)

#### EROTIC DREAM OF RED CHAMBER (1978)

director: Li Han-Hsiang

\*\*\*½

An original piece of Asian *erotica* comparable to the Euro soft-core classics, *Story Of O*, *Emanuelle*, and *The Fruit Is Ripe*. But it's definitely Oriental in mien. Based on a Cantonese opera, this lavish production from the Shaw Brothers tells the story of 15 year old Pao-Yu and his preoccupation with bedding beautiful women.

Much of the Chinese opera music is toned down to contemporary Mandarin (and inadvertently Western) taste, making this a very palatable and spicy audio/visual experience.



poster art for *Elusive Song Of The Vampire*

Some of the beautiful woman who visit Pao-Yu and his dream-quest are Li Ching-Hsia (see inside front cover) and Sylvia Chang. Give it a look. (Hong Kong)

#### EROTIC GHOST STORY

director: Bang M. Banks

\*\*\*½



#### EROTIC GHOST STORY 2

director: Bang M. Banks

\*\*\*½

Wutung is a demon. When visiting the Earth's netherworld, he is attracted to three beautiful ghost/fairies (one of them, former X-porn star Amy Yip). Disguised as a scholar, he seduces *the Three Fairies*: Hua Hua, Fei Fei and So So.

According to Oriental folklore, fairies are the first level of immortality and because of their "close relationship to humanity," they have a more difficult time controlling themselves from carnal pleasures. Regardless, these fairies are "compromised through deceit" and eventually they band together and destroy Wutung.

In *Part 2*, Wutung transports himself into another body and is now called Chiu-Sheng. He seduces a mortal named Hsiao-Yen. Heaven sends two militant fairies to stop the relationship.

There's lots of soft core nudity. And *Part 2* (the better made of the two films) has some surprisingly good, sensual cinematography. (Hong Kong)

#### ESCAPE FROM CORAL COVE (1988)

director: T. Chang

\*\*\*

An unfortunately nondescript, generic title hides this diamond-in-the-rough horror tale. When a drunkard urinates on sacred ashes in an abandoned churchyard, an evil sex killer is resurrected from a watery grave in the Coral Cove Lagoon. The ghostly creature begins stalking unsuspecting teen vacationers, particularly Irene and Alex (plus their nubile friends). Incredible underwater photography and a healthy dose of graphic gore. Paydirt. (Hong Kong)

#### ESPIRIT D'AMOUR (1986)

director: Ringo Lam

\*\*

A horror fantasy about a young man who falls in love with the ghost of a girl via an ouija board. Despite an unexpected, surprising finale (he loses the girl in an exorcism), there's really not much

going on here. Filmmaker Ringo Lam is a much better action director, see his *City On Fire* (also with Chow Yun Fat) for a good example. (Hong Kong)

#### ETERNAL COMBAT (1991)

director: Chun Sing

\*\*\*½

Wow! A magician recruits the spirit of a macho soldier (who, incidentally, died from a heart-attack while making love to five women) to help him fight a powerful, sinister ghost named Cici.

Cici is a beautiful Japanese dominatrix who, during an exuberant battle, whisks everybody into the future where she has gained control of an insane asylum. The inmates call her *the Evil Woman* and she proceeds to live up to her name. It's all very trashy and unique at the same time. (Hong Kong)

#### EXCUSE ME, PLEASE (1989)

director: Xung Xe-Ee

\*\*

A group of flim-flam friends (morticians by trade, more correctly cremators) are chased by the mob and then by ghosts in this horror comedy (with enough subplots to confuse even the most rabid Oriental enthusiast).

Especially bewildering is a graphic rape committed by "the heroes" (!) after which the violated girl kills herself (!!) and returns from the grave to seek revenge. It's tasteless by Western standards, and fascinating for the same reason. (Hong Kong)



**EXPOSED TO DANGER (1988)****director: Chia Yung**

\*\*\*

After being falsely accused of killing her best friend's father, a girl serves time in prison. She tries to start her life over again, but becomes the target for a psycho (in fact, the same one who did the original murder).

Lots of gore and maggot infested bodies. Plus a "girl fight" that culminates with a beheading! This one stirs the ashes.

(Hong Kong)

**EVIL CAT (1986)****director: Dennis Yu**

\*\*\*\*

A fascinating film that is also very scary. There are a lot of plot twists but the final twenty minutes is especially memorable. The villainess transforms into an incredibly powerful cat that, in her fury, destroys the police station.

(Hong Kong)

**FAI & CHI: KINGS OF KUNG FU**aka **KUNG FU VERSUS ACROBATICS (1987)****director: Lawrence Chu Tsang**

\*\*\*

Despite the cumbersome make-it-up-as-you-go storyline, the Hong Kong comedy team of Charles Fai and Charles Chi is loads of fun to watch. Besides the expected slap-stick, there are moments of satire ("Who's she?" referring to a picture of Britain's Queen Elizabeth, "So ugly...") and in-jokes ("We need a killer for protection!" cries Chi; "How about Chow Yun-Fat?" his girl-friend asks), plus there's even a clever live-action/cartoon-animation sequence (ala *Roger Rabbit*) in a ghostly cemetery. But, unfortunately, the rambling plot keeps the film from reaching its complete potential.

Two men (Fai and Chi) go deep into the uncharted regions of China in search of a mythical "hair tonic of the gods." They discover an ancient tomb and (through a series of accidental heroics) they revive beautiful 1000-year-old Princess Wendy and her aid, Mandy. The four return to Hong Kong, but so does an all-powerful and very jealous suitor from Wendy's past.

(Hong Kong)

**FATAL TERMINATION (1989)****director: Andrew Kam**

\*\*\*½

Superb action sequences, an intelligent plot, and beautiful Moon Lee are the components that boost

this entry above many other shoot-em-up competitors.

Regarding the FX stunts, one scene is particularly mind-blowing. The villains are dangling a little girl (by clutching only her hair!) from the window of a speeding car while Moon Lee is simultaneously grasping the hood and pounding away at the windshield desperately trying to break the glass to reach the crazed driver inside.

Unfortunately, the film suffers from a very slow beginning, perhaps a necessary evil, to establish the complex plot dealing with a corrupt customs official, the mob, the cops, and a missing shipment of illegal weapons.

(Hong Kong)

**FIGHT BACK TO SCHOOL (1991)****director: Jackie Wang**

\*

Here's an example of the Hong Kong film industry cloning really bad USA productions.

Remember the Hollywood junk movie *Undercover*? At least when David Nieldorf played "a cop going undercover as a High School student," it was to break up a juvenile drug ring. In this Asian version, it's to find out who stole the police commissioner's favorite pistol.

(Hong Kong)

**FINAL RUN (1988)****director: Richard Wong**

\*\*\*

This is *Midnight Angel* without the female caped-crusaders. Once again, Yukari Oshima steals the show as she seeks revenge against the drug overlord who killed her fiancée.

(Hong Kong/Thailand)

**FINAL TEST (1987)****director: Xen Ling Chu**

\*\*\*

Here's a nifty SciFi thriller that's a cross between *Logan's Run* (remember that one?) and *The Terminator*. Good FX include a semi-mechanical villain, half human and half machine. It's fun.

(Hong Kong)

**FIRE FIGHT (1988)****director: not translatable**

\*

A swordsman makes a bet that he can stay overnight in a graveyard, where he falls in love with a ghost. There's lots of mystical romanticism, ridiculous philosophical clichés that sound like

verses from sugary Hallmark greeting cards like "If there are ghosts, they're in your heart." Yuck. (Thailand)

# **FIRST TIME IS THE LAST TIME (1988)**

director: Raymond Leung

\*\*\*½

A very dark, realistic women-in-prison film from Angel director, Raymond Leung. Carrie Ng plays Winnie, a young woman who is jailed after avenging her boyfriend's death at the hands of some ruthless gangsters. Once in prison, Winnie befriends another inmate (Yukk) who, secretly because of the underworld massacre, wants her dead.

(Hong Kong)

# **FIRST VAMPIRE IN CHINA (1990)**

director: Yam Chun-Lu

\*\*

The initial ten minutes and the final thirty minutes are "four (\*\*\*\*) star" caliber, but the middle section is tedious to the point of intolerable. At the conclusion, when the vampire comes back to life all hell breaks loose. The scene with the bats attacking the front door is frightfully wonderful.

Also, worth the mention, when the vampire finally does return, he looks alot like the zombie in Ray Dennis Steckler's *Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living And Became Mixed-Up Zombies*. Just a coincidence?

(Hong Kong)

# **FLASH FUTURE KUNG FU (1984)**

director: Kirk Wong

\*\*

Somewhat of a rarity in Hong Kong films, a futuristic SciFi pic (also see *Final Test*). Unfortunately the story of a Kung Fu school "sticking with the old ways" in the wake of the *cyborpunks* is just so-so. An Asian *Fahrenheit 541*. (Hong Kong)

# **FLESH AND THE BLOODY TERROR (1988)**

director: Ken Yung

\*\*\*(\*)

This is an interesting (and very graphic) ripoff of *Hills Have Eyes* plus *Last House On The Left* and a big steal from *I Spilt On Your Grave*.

A group of teens go camping in the woods where they are stalked by some "backwoods" mutant-psycho (called, amazingly enough, *Disco Boys*). These frenzied weirdos rape (in shocking and

explicit "X" detail) one of the girls, and then gruesomely kill her brother.

When the local peace officer refuses to cooperate ("we don't have no Disco Boys in these parts...only outsiders messing up our countryside"), the girl's father takes justice into his own hands. He hunts down the sickos and eliminates them with brutal (and gory) ingenuity.

If your taste leans towards this type of sadistic fare, then the extra star (\*) in the rating is for you. (S E Asia/Hong Kong)

# **FORBIDDEN ARSENAL (1991)**

director: Yuen Chun Man/Cheng Shu Keung

\*\*\*½

Despite the generic title, this cop/action tale delivers the goods. In this case, the *goods* are huge quantities of guns being smuggled into Hong Kong from China.

There's a task force of two cops, one from mainland China (Too Shu Chun) and one from Taiwan (handsome Waise Lee), plus a police-woman from Hong Kong (action star Cynthia "In The Line Of Duty" Khan aka Yang Lai Ching) in charge of stopping the mafia-controlled shipments.

There's lots of ultra-violence and excessive gunplay. Plus great cinematography and good characterization, but unfortunately it's a very familiar story. Yet, overall, it's more quality stuff from producer Dickson Poon.

(Hong Kong)

# **FREEDOM FROM THE GREEDY GRAVE (1989)**

director: Lo Wei Don

\*\*\*

A good horror comedy from director Lo Wei Don (*Spooky! Spooky!*) that borrows liberally from

*Beetlejuice*, as a family moves into a haunted house possessed by the ghosts of the former occupants. A particularly shocking (read: *disgusting*) sequence features a geek-ghost biting off the heads of live frogs and snakes.

On the lighter side, in the beginning of the film, a young ghost/vampire asks his father: "Why do we always jump?"



"Because that's what the *living dead* do," answers Dad.

"Can't we change that now?" replies the child. And they begin walking. So much for tradition. (Hong Kong)

#### **FRIED FOX (1991)**

**director:** Willie Chung

\*½

Gangsters and gamblers (God! I'm getting tired of this!) in a typical Hong Kong action flick. The minuscule plot finds a man trying to quit working in a crooked casino. The card tricks during the opening credits are the best part of the movie. (Hong Kong)

#### **FURY IN RED (1991)**

**director:** Lau Kar Leung

\*\*

The director of *Tiger On The Beat* misses the mark this time in a mixture of "big business politics" and "gangster violence." A crooked importer named Shaw hires a Vietnamese street gang to wipe out his competitors. (Hong Kong)



controversial poster art for *FURY OF HEAVEN* showing lesbian sex

#### **FURY OF THE HEAVEN (1986)**

**director:** Chen Ching Lo

\*\*½

One of the better possession movies filled with hexes, spells and exorcisms. It also contains a

crucifixion (well, sorta), lesbian sex, and flying skulls. The overall tone is dark and gelid. You won't find any Asian slapstick in this one. (Hong Kong)

#### **GAMBLING GHOST (1991)**

**director:** Samo Hung

\*\*

Samo Hung, the Peter Sellers of Hong Kong, directs and plays three roles in this slow, feeble horror/ comedy. He's a "dreamer," a young man with high hopes but without the drive to achieve the goals. Plus he also plays the lad's useless father, and the ghost of the roguish grandfather who eventually teaches the grandson to become a gambling expert known as *the Saint Of Gambling*. Craps.

(Hong Kong)

#### **GANGLAND ODYSSEY (1991)**

**director:** W. M. Chan Charles

\*\*

A man returns to Hong Kong after a sixteen year exile. In 1974, he had eliminated a gangster boss, and now he's back to join his family as they fight to maintain control in the middle of a messy kidnapping.

Most of it looks good. But, the script is tired. Very tired.

(Hong Kong)

#### **GANGS (1987)**

**director:** Lawrence A. Mon

\*\*\*

A grim look at teenage violence in Hong Kong, similar in many ways to the rash of "gang" pics popular in the USA. However, it's very different from the *Gangster* films of John Woo/Tsui Hark (*Killers*, *A Better Tomorrow*).

This one doesn't glamorize the violence. The idea of "heroic bloodshed" is lost on these hapless characters. Instead, this film is actually the study of a "gang-in-demise" as the members of Sung/Sing are destroyed. Certainly, one of the best. Especially when compared to crap like *Black Sheep*.

(Hong Kong)

#### **GHOST BALLROOM (1990)**

**director:** Fong Ho

\*\*

A prostitute is killed. She returns from the grave to take revenge. But it takes her a while. Quite a while.

(Hong Kong)



**GHOST FESTIVAL (1985)**

director: Stephen Wu

\*

A psychopath solicits ghostly help to find out who killed his wife, and then concocts a bizarre plan (involving murder and re-animation) to get vengeance. Contains some nudity, unusual in films of this type, but who cares.

(Hong Kong)

**GHOST FEVER (1990)**

director: Nilson Cheung

\*\*½

It begins as a routine "happy-couple-buys-a-haunted-house" tale and develops into a supernatural version of *Fatal Attraction*.

Soon after they move into the house, the pregnant wife is hospitalized. The husband, a squirrely slug, takes the opportunity to seduce a woman that he meets in an elevator at his office building. Unfortunately for him, the woman is actually an insecure ghost with a jealous streak.

She also has a very vengeful family. Her mom retaliates by biting off the adulterous husband's penis. That'll show him! Right?

(Hong Kong)

**GHOST HOSPITAL (1988)**

director: Tony La Yung

\*

Because of a hospital hex, whenever a certain patient (why this one only?) sleeps he visits a supernatural world of hopping zombies and warring priests. A pathetic film. It's so disjointed that it looks like two different movies spliced together. And it probably is.

(Hong Kong)

**GHOST IN THE MIRROR (1974)**

director: Song Cumbou

\*\*½

A scholar falls in love with a beautiful girl, who may or may not be a ghost. This familiar theme in Chinese literature works well as an arty horror film. Visually stylish.

(Taiwan)

**GHOST MANSION (1987)**

director: Yuen Cheung Yan

\*\*

Obviously it was inspired by the success of the *Haunted Cop Shop* series, but this tiresome comedy has much more in common with the *American Police Academy* films. The S.W.A.T.

trainees (a coed group of goofy guys and buxom babes) are living in a haunted house. Shivers.

(Hong Kong)



montage of stills from GHOST SCHOOL

**GHOST SCHOOL (1987)**

director: Kam Ling Ho

\*

Could a movie be any worse? At least it wasn't "shot on video," but the story is a very unsatisfying blend of preppie humor and preppy horror about a ghost of an ancient warrior who tries to communicate with some vacationing fraternity boys. Obviously this was a take off on the *Happy Ghost* series. Abysmal.

(Hong Kong)

**GHOST SNATCHER (1989)**

director: Xen Lung Ting/Lan Nancai

\*\*\*

An absolute, unabashed *Ghost Busters* rip-off. But it's so much fun that the similarities are soon forgotten. Good FX, too. And Richard Ng's mugging is always welcome.

(Hong Kong)

**GHOSTLY VIXEN (1989)**

director: William Chang

\*\*\*\*

They call her the *Evil Girl*. And she comes from an alternative dimension. Her goal is to "suck the sperm and devour the life" from 100 human virgins. Once her mission is completed, she will receive an eternal body. Currently, she is at #98.

A leather clad gladiator has been sent by the Netherworld to stop her. The opening clash

between these two "superpowers" in a glitzy disco/nightclub restroom is truly phenomenal. And, incidentally, *Evil Girl* is a knockout, a stunning big-breasted Hong Kong beauty. You'll dream about this one.

Plus, there's more. This movie features some of the strongest (or perhaps, most objectionable) sex gags in Asian comedy, including a man cursed with a "magic penis spell." His *staff* grows so long that it literally drags on the ground. He has to tape it to his leg, but that leads to severe walking problems (just imagine!) when he gets sexually aroused.

Incidentally the same cast (and director) also made *Our Neighbors Are Phantoms*. (Hong Kong)

#### GHOSTS GALORE (1987)

director: Hsu Hsia

♦♦

Lo Lieh, once again playing an evil black-magic priest, unleashes some particularly nasty Japanese ghosts on a peaceful Chinese village. There's lots of action in the grand Shaw Brothers style, but too much slapstick spoils the film. At least for me.

#### GHOST'S LOVER (1984)

director: Wong Ching

\*

An uneven marriage between contemporary values and ancient sorcery as a man becomes involved with a girl who could be a ghost. Or then, maybe not. A familiar story in Oriental films. Once was enough.

(Hong Kong)

#### GOD OF GAMBLERS (1989)

director: Sun Chung

\*\*\*

#### GOD OF GAMBLERS 2 (1991)

director: L. T. Cheong

\*

Once again, Chow Yun-Fat elevates a so-so script into an exceptional film. #1 is a routine "gambler-takes-on-the-casino" tale with an unexpectedly unique *amnesia* twist, plus there's a riveting conclusion.

#2 is *Chow-Jess*. And misguided.

It's a slapstick action comedy that revolves around the antics of two inept gamblers, played by Andy Lau and Chiau Sing Chi. Apparently, they have special magical powers (i.e., being able to change the face-value of any card at will) but they can only use these talents for "benevolent"

purposes. The whole thing is a silly, embarrassing sequel. But, none-the-less, it made money at the Hong Kong Box Office, so #3 is likely. Bet on it. (Hong Kong)

#### GOLDEN QUEEN COMMANDO

aka AMAZON COMMANDO (1984)

director: Lawrence Full

♦♦♦♦

Not a horror or fantasy film, rather this is an Oriental Western (!) with seven captivating Asian beauties on horseback, complete with music stolen from a variety of Spaghetti Westerns, including *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*.

Led by Venus Lin (who wears a very chic eye patch), they singlehandedly take on the entire bad army. But that only happens after they break out of prison, save a village (*Magnificent Seven* style), and encounter ghosts in an ancient burial ground. Simple words can't describe this astonishing movie. It's truly gargantuan. Also starring Elsa Yeung and Sally Yeh (future female *Killer* superstar in an early role).

And don't miss the sequel, *Pink Force Commando*. Plus Venus Lin and Elsa Yeung are also together in *Phoenix The Raider*. Incidentally, Venus Lin is also known as Lin Ching Hsia.

(Hong Kong)

#### GOLIATHON (1977)

aka MIGHTY PEKING MAN

aka COLOSSUS OF CONGO (Euro title)

director: Ho Menga (Homer Gaugh)

♦♦♦♦

Even if there hadn't been a giant ape in this movie, it would've been a four (\*\*\*\*) star extravaganza. Even if the film weren't an unabashed Asian clone of *King Kong*, it would've been don't-miss-it entertainment.

The ads for *Goliathon* screamed: "Action! Excitement! Spectacle beyond your wildest dreams!" Certainly, these accolades were meant to describe beautiful Evelyn Kraft. She's the blond jungle girl who steals the show! She is mesmerizing (see back cover!).

Fresh from her performance in Franz-Joseph Gottlieb's German horror film *Lady Dracula*, Evelyn brings an incredible amount of screen sexuality to this Shaw Brothers production (yes, the same company that produced *Black Magic* series and *Human Skin Lanterns*). It's worth the price of admission (or tape rental) just to see Evelyn Kraft run around the city of Hong Kong in her jungle attire.



Incidentally, there exists a "European" version of this film (*Colossus Of The Congo*) in which Kraft dies at the end. And it also features some brief (but much appreciated) Evelyn Kraft nudity. (Hong Kong)

#### GRAVE SIDE STORY (1988)

director: Kam Yoo Tu

\*

The only good thing about this movie is the title. It's another stupid shot-on-video waste-of-time from this loser-of-a-director who also regurgitated the horrendous *Vampires Live Again*. And the equally terrible *Vampires Strike Back*. Somebody stop this maniac! (Hong Kong)

#### GREATEST LOVER (1988)

director: Fok Yiu Leung

\*\*

Take the *My Fair Lady* story (or *Pygmalion* for the highbrow reader; *Opening Of Misty Beethoven* for us trash pickers) and twist the genders Chow Yun-Fat stars as an obnoxious-nerd-transformed-into-a-refined-playboy who falls in love with his teacher.

(Hong Kong)

#### GRUDGE OF MOON LADY (1980)

director: Kim In Soo

\*\*\*

A medieval love triangle: 1) Man, 2) Poor Girl, and 3) Rich Girl.

Rich Girl tricks Poor Girl into leaving town. Lonely Man marries Rich Girl. Poor Girl is on her way back home when she is caught and held captive in a swamp by an Evil White Cat Spirit. She becomes possessed and she returns to the village where she destroys everything, murders her rival, and is eventually killed by her lover. Whew! (Korean)

#### GUARDIAN & SHE-GHOST OF SHOLIN

director: Wong Lu-Bwa (1984)

\*½

This is a typical (and very slow) dead-girl-gets-revenge-thru-a-ghost story. The only unusual aspect: after taking vengeance, she falls in love with a human. She doesn't want to return to heaven until her boyfriend can join her by killing himself. And he does.

(Hong Kong)

#### GUNMEN (1988)

director: Wong C. Keung

\*\*

Produced by Tsui Hark, in a rather obvious in an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of the John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* (also produced by Hark), this action *period* film is a heavy-handed mixture of drama and ultra-violence telling the story of an opium/drug war circa 1926. Carrie Ng makes it worth the watch. (Hong Kong)

#### HAPPY GHOST (1982)

director: Clifton Ko Sum

\*\*

#### HAPPY GHOST 2 (1983)

director: Clifton Ko Sum

\*

#### HAPPY GHOST 3 (1984)

director: Tsui Hark

\*\*

Part 1 and Part 2 are intrinsically the same movie, sort of a hybrid *Breakfast Club* meets *Teen Wolf*. Instead of a werewolf helping the team win the ballgame, this time it's a ghost.

By the third sequel, this premise was wearing very thin, so there's scarcely any similarity. Part 3 is a

meandering, episodic story of five reincarnated spirits and their (mis)adventures back on earth. Even director Tsui Hark doesn't talk about this one. Wisely.  
(Hong Kong)

#### HAUNTED COP SHOP 1 (1984)

director: Jeff Lau

\*\*½

Vampires have infested a meat-packing plant. The special "Monster Police Squad" must eradicate them. However, when they botch the job, their division loses status with the police commissioner. And they are relegated to menial jobs until the vampires invade the county hospital. Some good and scary FX, but it's mostly just silly. The sequel is better.

(Hong Kong)

#### HAUNTED COP SHOP 2 (1986)

director: Jeff Lau

\*\*\*

Don't be misled by the title. Nor by the fact that it's "Part 2."



This movie is really hot. It's nonstop action (even before the credits role) and the ending is...well, yes...unforgettable. The hero kills the vampire/creature by urinating into a pool, thus completing an electrical circuit, frying the monster. The hero's buddy laments his friend's unfortunate (yet noble) death by saying: "I'll think of him every time I piss."

They don't make 'em like that in America!

(Hong Kong)

#### HAUNTED HOUSE (1986)

director: Ng See Yuen

\*½

A woman (Tanny, the *porcelain doll* look-alike from *Human Skin Lanterns*) is terrorized by the ghost of her dead husband, a gangster executed in prison. Apparently, he's pissed off because his wife is having sex with his attorney.

(Hong Kong)

#### HAUNTED MADAM (1987)

director: Tony C. K. Lo

\*\*\*½

Similar to *Haunted Cop Shop* in style and pacing, this film is filled with wonderful, outrageous FX plus astonishing villains (and villainesses) including a ruthless, bloodthirsty "superman," and a sexy-but thoroughly-bad sorceress.

It's all tied together with four beautiful policewomen who are told by a reputable fortuneteller that they "will all meet the same man at the same time, he is dangerous, he will cause one of you to commit suicide, another to break your head, one of you will be raped and the last will be killed." Thanks to creative script writing, each of these prophecies comes true. Sorta.

(Hong Kong)

#### HE LIVES BY NIGHT (1987)

director: Po Chih Leo

\*\*\*

There's an interesting use of fashion and color in this stylishly photographed slasher film, similar to the Italian giallo films.

It's the story of a crazed transsexual killer who confesses his crimes to an all-night radio talk-show hostess until he decides that she, too, must die. Good tension flick.

(Hong Kong)

#### HEADHUNTER (1986)

director: Lau Shinghon

\*\*½

Ex-soldier goes mad after returning from the war. He begins stalking and killing citizens in the city.  
(Hong Kong)

#### HEARTBEAT 100 (1989)

director: Kent Cheu

\*\*\*

An effective slasher movie in the *Friday The 13th* mold. Graphic horror with some "high school" humor provided by the teens.

(Hong Kong)



**HELL HOLE (1989)**  
aka **ESCAPE FROM HELL HOLE**  
director: Maman Firmanstan

\*\*\*½

Lots of torture, whippings, and general S&M mayhem in this violent film about a women's prison (which also doubles as a brothel).

As with director Firmanstan's movie *I Want To Get Even*, the main concentration is on a young virgin who catches the eye of the evil warden. She'd rather be "punished" than succumb to his sexual wishes. She's brutalized for most of the film, but, eventually, she gets her revenge.  
(Hindu/Malasia/Indo China)

**HELLO DRACULA (1985)**  
director: Henry Wu-Leung

\*\*\*½

This is, perhaps, the strangest of the Hong Kong horror films (and that's really saying something!). The film's (\*\*\*½) rating is based on its "flabbergasting" quality and not necessarily on continuity. Read on...

Father is dead. Grandpa and three young children are taking his body to the sacred burial ground when their carriage is stopped by a hopping "Kid Vampire" who is trying to escape capture from a Taoist Monk.

The vampire child re-animates the dead dad who becomes Dracula and protects the child by killing the monk. The carriage driver is also killed in the scrimmage, but grandpa and the kids escape.

When they return to the village and warn the constable that "Dad has become Dracula," the official reacts by recruiting vampire hunters from Europe.

Meanwhile (seemingly out of context) the children become friendly with some harmless vampires, apparently not affiliated with Dracula's legion of the undead, and they work out a musical dance number with them. (Mmmmm)

About halfway into this film, the three English-speaking vampire hunters arrive. The "boss" plus a priest and a nun (who surprisingly gets naked in a shower scene). A meteor leads them to a baseball game played by the "Kid-Vampires." The priest sprinkles holy water on a skull (which is doubling as a baseball). When a vampire child touches it he becomes electrocuted. This pisses Dracula off. He rises from his grave and kills the three hunters and then attacks the city.

Eventually, Grandpa (a magician in his own rite) creates a gang of mercenary "bug-child-creatures" to fight Dracula and his cohorts. Then, in a particularly downbeat ending, Dad/Dracula is finally killed when one of his real children, wearing a belt of ignited dynamite, runs to his open arms. Kaboom.

(Hong Kong)

**HERO OF TOMORROW (1989)**  
director: Lo Haw-Lo

\*\*

A plodding, yet (at times) violent attempt to cash-in-on the popular *A Better Tomorrow* series, as indicated from the title.

This is the story of a gangster who gets out of prison in Hong Kong, kills his enemies, and goes to Taiwan. There he murders the existing mob boss and starts a new racket. Even though the conclusion climaxes into the "patented" gunplay blood-bath, there's a shallowness that permeates the entire production. It lacks the heart and style of the *John Woo's* productions.

(Hong Kong/Taiwan)

**HEROES SHED NO TEARS (1985)**  
director: John Woo

\*\*\*\*

Here's the film that *John Woo* directed just prior to his mega-hit *A Better Tomorrow*. And, perhaps, due to the overwhelming popularity of his "more accessible" gangster epic, this lurid action thriller was all but forgotten.

It is, however, a remarkable movie (similar in concept to *Cannibal Mercenaries*) about a band of soldiers-of-fortune who are hired by the Thailand government to "capture and bring back" a drug-smuggling Army General in the Viet jungle. Complete with blood-thirsty savages (ala *Man From Deep River*), the film is an ultra-violent and graphically gory adventure. Interestingly, however, the "patented" *Woo* melodramatic characterizations are totally missing.

(Hong Kong)

**HEROIC ONES (1982)**director: **Bau Hsieh-Lee**

\*\*

This adventure film about a grand tournament in medieval China is included for **Chang Ling** completists (see the **Wolf Devil Woman**).  
(Hong Kong)

**HEX (1980)**director: **Gui Zhihong**

\*

Another "man-fakes-death-and-comes-back-as-a-ghost" story. Enough already!  
(Hong Kong)

**HOCUS POCUS (1986)**aka **HOGUS POGUS**director: **Chien Yue Sang**

\*\*

The stars of the **Mr. Vampire** series appear in this film about a traveling troupe of actors who perform traditional Chinese Horror stories. *Stage Life* and *Real Life* blend together when ghosts and spirits start causing trouble.

The choreographed rituals are captivating but the story is notably weak. However (take special notice:) there's an outrageous subplot about a man urinating on a grave and an insulted ghost taking revenge.

(Hong Kong)

**HOLY VIRGIN VERSUS THE EVIL DEAD (1990)**director: **Yam Wu Wong**

\*\*\*½

The *Holy Virgin* is a Cambodian princess (of the *High Wind Tribe*) and she is a mixture of **Wolf Devil Woman** and the cute urchin from *Magic Of Spell*. With her magic sword, she confronts a brutal, blood-thirsty creature called the **Moon Monster** who has captured explorers from Hong Kong.

Yes, it's as good as it sounds.

(Hong Kong)

**HONG KONG BUTCHER (1985)**director: **Jeff Lau**

\*

A "Maniac On The Loose" type movie, but not as dynamic as *Raining Night's Killer*. Mostly it's a police procedural film with occasional glimpses into the "why" of the killer.

Despite the title, it's a rather bloodless adventure. Anemic.

(Hong Kong)

**HORROR INN (1986)**director: **Pao Fung-Pan**

\*

The owner of an out-of-the-way hotel is hiding his crazy wife in the basement. His secret is discovered when one of the guests mysteriously disappears. Pretty terrible.

(Thailand/Hong Kong)

**HOST FOR A GHOST (1985)**aka **MOST FOR A GHOST**director: **Lo Wei Lang**

\*

Here's a movie about a spirit who escapes the "pain of Hell" by agreeing to return among the living. The majority of the film concerns itself with the ghost's search for a perfect body to possess. Lots of lame and very tedious sight humor and slapstick.

(Hong Kong)

**HOUSE OF THE LUTE (1979)**director: **Lau Shinghon**

\*\*

An elderly man marries a young woman and moves to the country. She gets sexually involved with the houseboy; together, they kill the old man. But he returns as a ghost. Atmospheric and cautious. Lots of time is spent waiting for things to happen.

(Hong Kong)

**HUMAN SKIN LANTERNS (1982)**director: **Sun Chung**

\*\*\*½

A demented artist (played by **Lo Lieh**, future director of *Black Magic With Butchery*) kills young girls and skins them (in graphic detail). He pours mercury into an incision on their forehead which allows the epidermis to peel more easily. The skins, in turn, are used to create beautiful, ornamental lanterns in the shape of the dead girls.

This Medieval tale is written by **I Kuang**, author of many "dark" Asian horror films, including *Black Magic 2: Revenge Of The Zombies* and *Seventh Curse*. Gruesome and shocking, but mesmerizing.  
(Hong Kong)

**HUNDRED MONSTERS (1969)**aka **HUNDRED GHOST STORIES**director: **Kimiyoshi Yasuda**

\*\*\*½

This movie is a guilty pleasure. Besides being highly irresponsible, it just looks so damn good!

Basically, when a businessman transforms a church into a whore-house, all hell breaks loose.

For the Grand Opening, he hires a local "yarnsman" to tell the story of the hundred ghosts who used to inhabit "the sacred grounds."

Resurrected by the words, the creatures invade the brothel, destroying prostitutes and customers alike. The *Snake Woman* with her long (and lethal) neck is a must see.

(South East Asia/Japan)

#### **HYPOCRITE (1986)**

director: Chuen Ylum San

\*\*

An abundance of subplots make this film very difficult to follow; however visually it is quite striking. Through a zealous use of light and dark shadowing, it is also very grotesque, especially the segments about a sadist and his captive coed.

(Hong Kong)

#### **I WANT TO GET EVEN (1988)**

aka **VIOLENCE SUPREME**

director: Maman Firmansjah

\*\*\*½

Another violent Hindu/Indo China film, this time dealing with a young virgin (Eva Arnaz) who is tricked into joining a prostitution/slavery racket. After loads of torture and sordid sex, she escapes and (as the title indicates) gets revenge.

Director Maman Firmansjah made a similar motion picture called *Hell Hole*.

(Hindu/Malasia/Indo China)

#### **ICEMAN COMETH (1991)**

director: David Li-Chi

\*\*\*\*

An Asian mixture of *Time After Time* with *Iceman* as frozen bodies (originating from the Ming Dynasty) are found in the Himalaya Mountains. After being whisked to Hong Kong for examination, they are thawed and "rejuvenated."

One of the "icemen" is a Royal Guard Policeman (Yuen Biao), the other is an arch-villain named San (Yuen Wah) who had raped and murdered his way across ancient China. Their chase, at one time cut short by a mishap in the mountains (hundreds of years earlier), now continues in Hong Kong.

Along the way, the hero is befriended by Polla (Maggie Cheung) a prostitute who suddenly finds herself in the middle of the perilous situation. She adds an additional level of charm to the break-neck action.

(Hong Kong)

#### **IMP (1981)**

director: Dennis Yu

\*\*\*

Graphically detailed surgery, zombies, and gory deaths in another Rosemary's Baby type story. Familiar plot; unique approach.

(Hong Kong)

#### **IMPETUS FIRE (1988)**

director: Hwa Hu

\*\*\*

The (\*\*\*) rating is given with reservations. Not everyone will be amused (nor entertained) by this controversial Filipino/Chinese production. However, director Hwa Hu's excessive disregard for conventions plus an unsuspected ultra-violent conclusion put this film in a class by itself.



Girls returning home from a high school dance find themselves involved in perverse sexual games, first with each other and then with the yearbook photographer. As they slip deeper into "peer pressure" depravity their behavior becomes more and more psychotic. Very XXX-rated, sleazy but begrudgingly fascinating.

(South East Asia)

#### **IN BETWEEN LOVES (1990)**

director: Chuen Ylum San

\*\*

A taxi driver becomes obsessed with a female TV news reporter in this low-keyed Asian version of *The Fan*.

(Hong Kong)

#### **IN THE BLOOD (1988)**

director: Andy Lau

\*

Actor Andy Lau directs this very slow "wanna-be-action-film" about an accident prone policeman.

His friend **Samo Hung** plays a waiter in a cameo part. But nothing seems to click.  
(Hong Kong)

**IN THE LINE OF DUTY 1** (1986)

director: David Chung

\*\*\*\*



**IN THE LINE OF DUTY 2** (1987)

director: Cha Chuen Yee

\*\*\*



**IN THE LINE OF DUTY 3** (1988)

director: Arthur Wong/Brandy Yuen

\*\*\*\*



**IN THE LINE OF DUTY 4** (1989)

director: Yuan Woo Ping

\*\*\*½



**IN THE LINE OF DUTY 5: A BEGINNING**

aka **QUEENS HIGH** (1991)

director: Chris Lee

\*\*\*\*

It's easy to see why this series continues to be one of the most popular among the stiff competition of Hong Kong action flicks. It gives the audience exactly what it wants.

Besides showcasing pretty **Cynthia Khan** (who consistently proves that it's possible to *kick some Kung Fu ass* and look cute at the same time), this series is blatantly straightforward regarding its sledge-hammer intention. Pure and simple, this is exploitation. Action-for-action-sake. The plot is little more than an excuse for the wall-to-wall mayhem.

Interestingly, despite the shared animosity between Japan and China, two of the films (#1 and #3) feature Japanese characters in pivotal roles. In both cases, as male detectives. **Henry Sanada** co-stars in #1 as Peter Yamamoto, a policeman who retires to Hong Kong with his wife and child, only to have his family killed by a fanatical terrorist. In #3, obviously inspired by *Black Rain*, **Hiroshi Fujioke** plays a Jap cop who arrives in Hong Kong to avenge the death of his partner.

**Cynthia Khan** (called **Michele Khan** in the English Language version of #1) stars in all the entries. The series has made her one of HK's leading female action stars. Deservedly so.

Although the 1990 version (*In The Line Of Duty: The Beginning* aka *Queens High*) is an extravagant *heroic bloodshed* flick, it's a sequel in name only.

**Cynthia Khan** (looking great in a very kinky outfit, complete with thigh-high boots) takes over the "family" organization after her father and husband, two notorious gangsters, are killed.

Incidentally, with some minor editing, **Bo Ho Films** has re-released #2 (also called *Middle Man* in some markets) under the *In The Line Of Duty* #5 banner.

(Hong Kong)

**INTO THE NIGHT** (1989)

director: Yuri Won Ting

\*\*½

This is another man-comes-back-from-the-grave-to-see-revenge tale, gone haywire. It starts out as a simple story. Man comes home and finds his wife in bed with a friend, the two kill him and bury his body in the garden. But he returns as a ghost.

Now here's where it gets complicated. The wife and friend rent the house to another girl; meanwhile the ghost enters the body of a housepainter who freaks out and kills his partner. He is arrested for the murder, but gets away from the policeman. He returns to the house, which is now occupied by the new girl. They fall in love, but their romance is interrupted by the vengeful policeman (also now possessed!) who is angry that his prisoner had escaped.

The whole thing escalates into a gory bloodbath wherein everybody (the wife, the lover, the killer, the cop; but not the girl) are all destroyed.

(Taiwan)

**INVINCIBLE** (1984)

director: Chang Ling

\*\*\*

An action/adventure movie with fantasy overtones from alluring **Chang Ling** (alias **Pearl "Wolf Devil Woman" Cheong**). Great sets and impressive sword play. Plus **Chang**!  
(Hong Kong)

**ISLAND ON FIRE** (1991)

director: Chu Yen-Ping

\*\*\*\*

A top notch cast (**Jackie Chan**, **Tony Leung**, **Samo Hung**, **Andy Lau** and **Wang Yu**) add additional firepower to this contemporary "prison" cum "heroic bloodshed" film.

With similarities to the Japanese movie *Death Shadows*, this one tells the story of a warden who fakes death certificates of condemned convicts, recruiting them into an army of secret assassins against "untouchable criminals."



The crackerjack ending finds Jackie, Samo, and Andy in an ultra-violent war against a drug-lord's militia. It's an exhilarating battle, John Woo fashion. Very different for Jackie Chan... (Hong Kong)

#### ISLAND WARRIORS (1984)

director: Aj Yeung Chuen

\*\*\*

There's an island populated only by women; they are invaded by pirates but the females remain victorious. The women take captives. Some of the men are experimented on (castrations, etc) and some are experimented with (copulation, etc). The whole thing ends, after a major conflict, with the two sexes living together in mutual harmony. By the way, there are musical numbers (!?!), campy and fascinating. (Hong Kong)

#### ISLE OF FANTASY (1984)

director: Chien Yueh Chuen

\*\*

A needlessly confusing film about a group of girl scouts trapped on a desert island, with drug smugglers and a giant ape. (Hong Kong)

#### JAILHOUSE EROS (1989)

director: Wong Ching

\*\*½

All the usual Babes-Behind-Bars perils are in this film, plus (thanks to a Devil worshipping cellmate) there are also ghosts and jiangshi (hopping zombies) in this outlandish excursion, too. With Richard Ng. (Hong Kong)

#### JUST HEROES (1989)

director: John Woo

\*\*

Similar to the other John Woo gangster films but this one suffers from the absence of strong characters, coupled with a very contrived script. There's wagonloads of "cool" macho posturing, plus typical melodramatic tirades about loyalty, but much of it seems like lip-service.

The barren plot (about the Hong Kong mafia in shambles after the mysterious slaying of its leader) has more-than-the-usual-amount of excessive gunplay. But, unfortunately, the igniting spark is missing from the proceedings. It never catches fire. (Hong Kong)



CHOW YUN FAT

#### THE KILLER (1989)

director: John Woo

\*\*\*\*

Hong Kong's #1 action director (see *A Better Tomorrow 1* and *2*) delivers an explosive no-holds-barred story about an impossible triangle involving a tough cop (Danny Lee), a blind cabaret singer (Sally Yeh) and a professional hit man (Chow Yun-fat).

The violence is unexpected and extraordinarily brutal. It's a constant swirl of gunblasts and bloody mayhem in the middle of an (otherwise) bittersweet tale. This movie is a remarkable accomplishment. If you see only one Asian film, see this one.

(Hong Kong)



DANNY LEE

#### KILLER ANGELS (1989)

director: John Woo (Xen I)

\*\*\*\*

An excellent Angel ripoff, clandestinely directed by John Woo with upstart Xen I.

These three "Blue Angels" (including tremendous Moon Lee; don't miss her great nightclub scene) wipe out the entire Mafia gang when they take on a mission protecting a former mob member who is ready to "turn state's evidence."

At least 60 bad guys dance the blood ballet during an incredible final half hour of nonstop gunplay and kaboom explosions. Not really a horror movie but there's more gore and sleaze here than any ten American terror films.

(Hong Kong)

#### KILLERS MUST DIE (1990)

director: Sam Cheng

\*

A lame attempt to capitalize on the slick Hong Kong gangster films. But the movie lacks style. And a budget.

A mafia hitman avenges the death of his godfather boss. During the execution, he meets (and falls in love with) a bohemian artist named Yin who helps him escape from the clutches of the mob.

Just don't make me sit through it again...  
(Hong Kong)

#### KILLER'S ROMANCE (1990)

director: X. R. Tu

\*\*\*

Simon Yam (the new "star-to-watch" from *A Bullet In The Head*) is Nidaine, the son of a Japanese underworld kingpin. When his father is killed by a rival Chinese gang, Nidaine takes revenge. Like *Dragon From Russia*, the story is loosely based on the popular Japanese comic book, *Crying Freeman*.  
(Hong Kong)

#### KUNG FU FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE (1982)

director: Li Zhao

\*\*\*

Gangs of rival ghosts are stopped and destroyed by menstruation blood from a virgin. (!?) Unusual fare.  
(Hong Kong)



vogue/Yukari Oshima strikes a pose

#### KUNG FU WONDER CHILD (1989)

director: Lee Tso Nam

\*\*\*\*

You'll find everything in this film! Magic spells, zombies, human skin masks, evil magicians, flying

Kung Fu action, irreverent humor. Yes, you'll find everything that puts an Asian fantasy movie in a class by itself. Plus (and what a bonus this is!) this frenzied motion picture features two incredible female leads: the sumptuously sexy *Yukari Oshima* (also see *Midnight Angel* and *Final Run*) and frolicsome *Lin Hsiao Lan* (see *Magic Of Spell*).  
(Taiwan/Hong Kong)

#### KUNG FU ZOMBIE (1983)

director: Hwa I Hu

\*\*½

There's lots of great stuff in this movie, unfortunately it all takes place in either the first ten minutes or in the last half hour. Forget the middle (take a nap) but don't miss the zenith, over-the-top fight scene between *Billy Chong* and the evil zombie.  
(Hong Kong)

#### KWAIDAN (1964)

director: Masaki Kobayashi

\*\*\*

Perhaps this film is a bit too "arty" to be included here, with its emphasis on picturesque, eye-catching cinematography. But, even though *slow* by today's standards, it's still a good introduction to the Oriental horror genre.

Based on traditional Japanese ghost stories, this is a collection of three tales (or four, if you see the uncut version, running 164 minutes) dealing with the supernatural.

The best is the final segment about a musician/monk who is forced to play a concert for a ghost army. To protect him, a priest paints "holy texts" all over the musician's body, but forgets to inscribe the ears which, in a moment of irony, are torn off by the ghosts.  
(Japan/South East Asia)

#### LADY GHOST AND CANNIBAL GIRL (1988)

director: Htuhun So

\*

Terrible. Another unwatchable bore from Thailand. There's not even a touch of nudity to save it; strangely, the heroine even wears her clothes while taking a bath!

Aulhe decides to attend a fair with her friends instead of taking care of her sick mother. When she returns, her mom is dead. Aulhe is cursed, her spirit possessed, and eventually she has to fight the "cannibal girl" to become part of the human race again.  
(Thailand)

**LADY TIGER (1989)**

director: Ry-Man

\*½ or \*\*\*½

Depending on your reasons for liking Asian cinema, you will either find this film *insoluble* or *incredible*. So pick your own rating.

Okay. Technically it's dreadful. But....

....this is one of the few Thailand productions featuring nudity (lots of it!) and gratuitous gore (bucket loads). Shouldn't that count for something?

It's the story of a doctor and his obnoxious shrill wife who go deep into the jungle "to help the less fortunate."

As it turns out, their new neighbors are brother and sister lycanthropes, capable of "turning into" tigers when they get sexually excited or are violently threatened.

No, they don't become real tigers. They grow fangs and claws. And they howl alot. But they keep their general appearance (except at the end when the girl, Tucan Tia, becomes a genuine tiger and is shipped to a zoo).

However, they are vicious. And they graphically kill alot of people during the film, including the doctor's wife. Eventually, Doc falls in love with Tucan and tries to protect her from the pissed off villagers. He rescues the girl from a crucifixion and (as already mentioned) has her committed to a zoo, which he visits daily. Sad, huh? (Thailand)

**LADY WOLF (1991)**

director: Richard X. C. Tung

\*\*\*\*

Similar in look and style to the Jean Rollin vampire films, this Asian opus tells the story of three beautiful female werewolves and their vengeance against Hsi Wei, a fur merchant and his ancestors. Prolific character actor Wu Ma (aka Ng Ma Wu) makes an appearance as a relentless hunter who has spent years tracking down the creatures, but never quite catching them.

Certainly, these are not werewolves in the traditional Western sense. Rather, they are gorgeous seductresses who transform into white-haired, fanged creatures (with tails) at the "moment of attack." Usually during sex.

(Hong Kong)

**LAST BLOOD**

aka 12 HOURS OF TERROR (1991)

director: Wang Ching

\*\*\*

An ultra violent crime tale as a fascist Japanese mafia group tries to take over in Hong Kong. First it's *massacre time* between the two underworld gangs. And then with the Hong Kong police, led by popular Andy Lau.

(Hong Kong)

**LEECH GIRL (1969)**

director: Jin Weng/Lin Yiklu

\*\*

An early Hong Kong film that suffers from poor filming techniques and "off camera" action. The title (*Leech Girl*) comes from the fact that a magician force-feeds poisonous leeches to the heroine in hopes of driving her insane, thus keeping her from marrying the chief's son.

Don't expect *Centipede Horror*. The FX are implied, not seen.

(Hong Kong)

**LEGEND OF THE LIVING CORPSE (1990)**

director: Chen Chang

\*

Usually you can depend on actor Carrie Wu for (at the very least) a sleazy good time, but this anemic ghost tale is just plain boring. Don't fall for it.

(Hong Kong)

**LEGEND OF THE MOUNTAIN (1979)**

director: King Hu

\*\*

A long (110 minute), plodding fantasy film about a man and his quest for nirvana. There are a few interesting FX (especially the flying, flute playing good witch) but most of it is tedious going, irregardless of it's "classic" status.

(Hong Kong)

**LEWD LIZARD (1985)**

director: Wang Hsiung

\*\*\*

This one is very nasty (by "Western" criterion). A young suitor (Wai Wang) looses his girlfriend to a wealthy businessman. At first he's angry. Then, in a fit of depression, he goes to the seashore where he finds (what else?) lizards.

Immediately the man puts the lizards into a bag and takes them home. At this point, the plot turns strange: for no apparent reason, the man becomes

obsessed with ladies' dirty underwear (!!!) (actually sniffing the panties to make sure!) and he steals six or seven "tainted" ones from various public restrooms and geisha houses.

But, why? Well, here's where the plot turns repulsive: he mixes the "juices" from the underwear with a special "aggressive compound" and then injects the fluid into the lizards. These little reptiles (now hooked on "love jizz") become soldiers in his personal battle against females.

"I hate women!" he screams, holding the helpless victim's legs apart, allowing the little creatures to gain entrance. Lots of women die, driven mad with sexual ecstasy and (of course) pain, while the psycho howls with laughter.

In a particularly tasteless segment, he meets a girl that "he really likes," the soundtrack bursts into a sappy love song as the two flirt, kiss, walk, run, and kiss again. But while boating, she finds the jar of lizards ("What cute things!" she says. "Don't touch them," he responds protectively. "Don't be silly," she answers, pushing him away) and promptly opens the jar and drops the lizards down her bikini trunks (!!!). "I love the fe-e-e-e-l-l-l ....O God! No!" she cries in delirious agony. Too bad. True love never runs smooth.

(Hong Kong)



there's a new ghoul in school: Love Me, Vampire

#### LIFE AFTER LIFE (1981)

director: Peter Yung

\*

Puppets come to life and wreck havoc in feudal China. Don't you have something better to do? (Hong Kong)

#### LOVE ME VAMPIRE (1987)

director: Irene Wang

\*\*

The Oriental answer to USA's *Fright Night* movie, but there's more concentration on the high school motif similar to the Hong Kong *Happy Ghost* series. It's cute. What the hell... (Hong Kong)

#### LOVE WITH A GHOST IN LUSHAN (1975)

director: Chang Peng Ye

\*\*

A medieval, fantasy ghost film with some outrageous moments but mostly it's the familiar "man in love with a ghost" theme. (Hong Kong)

#### LOVES OF THE LIVING DEAD (1984)

aka HEAVEN WIFE, HELL WIFE

director: Ho Menga

\*\*\*

An outrageous zombie movie filled with "blood and gore" and a beautiful queen vampire in a short red dress. From the director of *Black Magic 2: Revenge Of The Zombies* and *Goliathon*. (Hong Kong)

#### LUNATICS (1985)

director: Hwa I Hu

\*

A terrible "cops vs the killer" movie made by the creator of the enjoyable *Kung Fu Zombie*. This one totally misses the mark. (Hong Kong)

#### MAGIC AMETHYST (1990)

director: Kevin X. Cheung

\*\*\*

Here's a fast-paced action/comedy about a young couple who, inadvertently, are the target of a *blood cult* from India when a dying Hindu priest entrusts them with a sacred statue.

Lady Hai from Bombay (Sibelle Hu dressed in a gold superwoman costume) chases the reluctant heroes through the streets of Hong Kong as they try to find Prince Cayle and the Sha Jan Temple. After the amethyst is returned, the film becomes a

crackling, blood splattering gun-fest as even Lady Hai is destroyed by her own gang.  
(Hong Kong)

#### MAGIC COP (1989)

director: H. Ching

\*\*\*½

Uncle Feng (*Lam Ching Ying*, the chief good guy from the *Mr Vampire* series) is a former police detective who rejoins the force to investigate a drug trafficking case involving ghosts and vampires. The conclusion is a lot of fun, visually.

There's also some valuable *supernatural folklore* offered: If a cursed body stiffens, it's a vampire; if it doesn't stiffen, it's an ogre.  
(Hong Kong)

#### MAGIC NEEDLES (1990)

director: L. Xen Chu

\*\*\*

This is a medieval melodrama with a very obvious (and biased) political message. Dr. Nip and his *magical acupuncture* (the practice of piercing parts of the body with needles in seeking to treat disease) cures the Emperor's son after the regular doctors fail. It's acupuncture versus medical science in this slow-paced oddity.  
(China)

#### MAGIC OF SPELL (1990)

director: Ching Chung Wu

\*\*\*\*

Tim Paxton wrote about this film in his fan-zine, *Monster*: "It's a 'this-is-so-cool-I-don't-want-to-blink-or-I'll-miss-something' experience."

I'm not sure anybody could say it better. This movie is loaded (and I mean *loaded*) with a virtual parade of eye-popping, mindblowing, utterly flabbergasting segments. And these segments are so demented, so crazed, that the viewer will be dumbstruck by their sheer vitality. Where else can you see a heroine chased by a giant boulder with teeth while an evil magician baths in a pool of blood?

Impishly cute Lin Hsiao Lan (aka Sui-Chang) continues her mischievous yet heroic character from *Kung Fu Wonder Child*. That's another film you don't want to miss!  
(Hong Kong)

#### MAGIC STORY (1986)

director: I Yung Tong

\*\*\*

Lots of slapstick antics as a priest goes through the rituals designed to control an army of zombies,

but the actual plot has to do with a boy who tries to win the respect of his girlfriend's father by becoming a vampire-hunting "ghost-buster." However, after visiting the magical netherworld he decides to enlist supernatural aid in his quest for the girl.

A seemingly important piece of Oriental zombie *control* is activated in this film: you can become invisible to a vampire, ghost or zombie if you hold your nose when they're around. Valuable information, right?  
(Taiwan)

#### MAGICIAN WARS (1987)

director: Tam Leung Xen

\*

The story relies mostly on FX or "sight gags," primarily dependent on flying objects (sort of like the bedroom scene in *Poltergeist*, but not nearly as effective).

There is no consistent plot in this lame film, only a reoccurring thread-of-a-story-line about two magicians who are trying to impress the same girl. One of the worst. Jeez.  
(Thailand)

#### MAN BEHIND THE SUN (1990)

director: Xeng Lu Law

\*\*\*\*

This is an uncompromising (well filmed but repulsive) movie that vividly shows the atrocities committed by the Japanese against the Chinese inside the walls of the "scientific research oriented" concentration camps during the Second World War.

The camera doesn't ever stray from the horrendous images, rather it uses those scenes (example: a young blind boy's chest is cut open and heart



removed "just to see what it looks like") to emphasize the incredible lack of inhumanity by the oppressor. Sobering and powerful.

**Part 2** was released as **Asian Trash Cinema** went to press. It's called **Man Behind The Sun 2: Laboratory Of The Devil**. More info next issue. (Hong Kong)

**MANY FACED WOMAN** (1989)

director: Wang Yung Ling

•

Wal Wang (the star of **Lewd Lizard**) is a tormented artist specializing in psychedelic body-painting. He is one of three men, unknowingly, sharing the same woman. Eventually, she blackmails each of them. And becomes rich. Try to stay awake. I challenge you. (Hong Kong)

**MIDNIGHT ANGEL** (1988)

aka **JUSTICE WOMEN**

director: Chik Ki Yee

\*\*\* ½

God! I love this movie. I just wish it made more sense. If we shave away all the silliness dealing with the police captain (and some of it is downright embarrassing), what remains is a brilliant parody of "caped crusader" heroics mingled with a truly frightening villain.

Three sisters become vigilantes when a cop boyfriend is murdered by the brutal drug lord. Besides the anticipated ultra-violent ending, scenes of the masked *superwomen* avenging various "street" crimes (a man beating his pregnant wife, a punk robbing a blind man, etc.) are priceless.

**Yukari Oshima** is wonderful. More and more, I'm a believer. With the right breaks, the '90s could be hers.

(Hong Kong)

**MING GHOST** (1991)

director: Raymond Xen-Tu

\*\*\*

Obviously inspired by the success of the **Chinese Ghost Story** series, this film is much starker and more simplistic in its approach. The style closely resembles the Swedish "art" films of the '60s, relying on posturing and symbolism instead of the slam-bam action typical of most Hong Kong movies.

The story, incidental as it may be, centers on the ghostly return of a woman who was cursed and tortured for being a whore.

(Hong Kong)

**MISS O** (date unknown)

director: Cheung Sung with Li Tzu Hsing

\*\* ½

A very young **Chow Yun Fat** (using the odd alias *Aman Chow Yun*) is the star of this obscure erotic thriller. Sporting shoulder length hair and psychedelic bellbottoms, he meets Miss O (*Sarina Sal*) and marries her. But, he soon begins to realize that she isn't *quite* right.

Miss O suffers from a sleeping disorder. At unexpected moments she simply conks-out. All this leads to an unlikely and ludicrous kidnapping. Of course, Chow comes to the rescue.

(Hong Kong)

**MISTRESS OF THE THUNDERBOLT** (1984)

director: Chang Cheuh

\*\*\*

Silver Roc is an enemy of the corrupt governor; a writ of execution is issued against him. He joins forces with his old classmate and lover, Golden Swallow. Together, with their furious swordplay concatenation, they conquer all the bad guys.

Another classy adventure from the **Shaw Bros.** (Hong Kong)

**MIXED UP** (1985)

director: Henry S. Chen

\*\*

An okay kids-in-peril horror comedy with a vampire and something that looks like the **Frankenstein** monster. The final "creature confrontation" on a pleasure yacht (similar to **Eddie Romero's Beast Of Blood** segment) is the standout.

(Hong Kong)

**MONK'S FIGHT** (1987)

director: Yu Chik Lim

•

This story of a renegade monk stealing a sacred vase from **Sholin Temple** is intolerably slow. And dimwitted. Only **Horacio Higuchi** could love crap like this.

(Hong Kong/Taiwan)

**MONKEY WAR** (1984)

director: Chang Ching

\*\*\* ½

One of the best examples of Chinese fantasy. There's lots of action and comic book excitement. The standout is when the giant spiders turn into beautiful, yet evil, witches.

(Hong Kong)

**MOON LEGEND (1991)**

director: Joey Wang

\*\*\*\*

A young swordsman is plagued with a reoccurring dream featuring a beautiful vampire, Moon-Cher. These dreams are so vivid that at one point he awakes holding part of her bracelet. He's positive that she is alive. Somewhere. And that she is in danger. Determined to find and rescue her, he embarks on a remarkable journey.

Incredible photography, tremendous state-of-the-art special effects, and completely innovative scenes (i.e., the female vampire stabs her victim with a hollow reed and then, using it as a straw, sucks his blood) elevate this film to an elite status. Don't miss it.

(Hong Kong)

**MR. CANTON AND LADY ROSE (1989)**

director: Jackie Chan

\*\*\*

A mixed bag. And very unusual for Jackie Chan. Perhaps, as a direct response to the critics who chastise him for the "mindless, non-existent plots" in his films, Jackie has created a goodlooking movie that relies more on characterization than stunts. And, while some of the film seems overtly *pseudo*, much of it works very well.

Jackie Chan, acting as both star and director, tells the story of a poor Chinese immigrant who "makes good" in corrupt Honk Kong circa 1940s. (Hong Kong)

**MR. POSSESSED (1988)**

director: Pan Yung-Ee

\*\*\*

Whenever he becomes sexually excited, a particularly shy boy is possessed by an evil spirit. While under the influence of the demon, he says things like "Go up on the roof and streak" (!?! ) and "Fuck a Duck" (!?!?!). All this is happening because his family is cursed with an "end-of-a-bloodline" spell.

There is also an unexpected subplot about a friend who turns into a vampire-sort-of-werewolf and crashes the girls' slumber party. The two plots don't appear to be related in any way.

(Hong Kong)

**MR. VAMPIRE (1984)**

director: Wong Kee Hung

\*\*\*\*

The first and most impressive in this popular series. Don't be put off by the title. The movie has



Lam Ching Ying, the legendary one eyebrow priest

all the unique elements that distinguish Oriental horror films from other country's entries. In fact, this film is probably one of the best introductions to this unique genre.

There's lots of action and thrills, plus a tremendous performance from Lam Ching Ying as the chief magician *vampire buster*, also known as the "one eye-brow priest." (Hong Kong)

Others in this series:

**MR. VAMPIRE 2 (1985)**

director: Sung Kam Shing

\*\*\*

**MR. VAMPIRE 3 (1986)**

director: Wong Kee Hung

\*\*\*½

**MR. VAMPIRE 4 (1987)**

director: Law Lit

\*\*½

**NEW MR. VAMPIRE (1988)**

aka KUNG FU VAMPIRE BUSTER

director: Xen Lung Ting

\*\*\*

**NEW MR. VAMPIRE 2 (1989)**

aka ONE EYE-BROW PRIEST

director: Mason Ching

\*\*

**MURDER OF MURDERS (1982)**

director: Sun Chung

\*\*\*

The incredibly valuable *Six Gems* is stolen from a fortress-like jewelry establishment in medieval China. The plot thickens when the #1 suspect, Pan Chen Feng (played with sinister glee by Lo Lih) is mysteriously poisoned in this unique Asian whodun-it murder mystery.

Probably shot in tandem with *Human Skin Lanterns*, this one features the same cast and same director.

(Hong Kong)

**MY COUSIN, THE GHOST (1986)**

director: Lu Wong-Tu

\*\*\*

A man (Richard Ng) sells his restaurant in the UK and returns to share the profits with his cousins in Hong Kong. There's lots of forced humor (dealing mostly with cramped living quarters and bad food) until it's discovered that the man is actually a zombie.

The final half hour is filled with good FX (especially when a female ghost removes her head) and features music liberally lifted from "Ghostbusters."

(Hong Kong)

**MYSTICS IN BALI (1989)**

director: H Tjuit Djalili

\*\*\*½

Hindu/Indo China horror films tend to be the most graphically gory of all the Southeast Asian entries. And this one probably leads the pack.

Popular exploitation director Djalili (best known for the second and most accomplished installment in *The Warrior* series) creates an excessive "black magic" tale complete with snake-transformations, ugly warlocks, cackling witches, and the legendary Leač blood cult.

A female writer from the States visits India hoping to learn more about the "most powerful magic in the world." Soon, she is taking lessons from the *Mystic Master* of the anagogic Leač sect. But, secretly, he is using her to acquire certain "juices needed for eternal life."

The warlock dislocates the trainee's head. And in a sequence that will astonish even the most jaded horror enthusiast, he sends her on a mission to a nearby house where a woman is about to give birth, ordering the head to devour the baby upon delivery.

Strong stuff.

(Hindu/S E Asia)

**NAKED COMES THE HUNTRESS (1985)**

director: Yam Ti Lung

\*

Cool title. Bad movie. A fantasy film about three hunters who fall in love with a nymph living in the snowy mountains. Amazingly slow.

(Hong Kong)



Naked Comes The Huntress, pun intended?

**NIGHT CALLER (1987)**

director: Philip Chan

\*\*\*\*

This is a tough, no-nonsense thriller with amazingly exploitive overtones. A lesbian relationship "gone sour" is the catalyst for this film which features graphically convincing, slasher-type, knife killings plus highly disturbing, decadently psychotic, behavior from the (otherwise beautiful) villainess.

There are also tender, bittersweet moments in the midst of the absolute madness. Uniquely impressive camera work, fast-paced direction, solid acting, and an offbeat ending put this film in a class by itself.

(Hong Kong)

**NIGHT EVIL SOUL (1988)**

director: Richard Chung

\*\*\*\*

Similar to (but better than) *Grudge Of The Moon Lady*, this one successfully combines elements of horror and fantasy into one exuberant package.

As the legend goes, a beautiful witch named Ko had controlled the whole region through the spirit of her black cat. When some of the townsmen turned up dead, both she and her cat are executed. However, they return from the grave and, with an army of crazed felines, they wipe out the entire community.

100 years later Chin Hsiung and his finance, Kim, are converting around the *Pond of The Black Cat* when he becomes hopelessly infatuated with a mysterious woman (obviously the evil Ko). In order to save the relationship, Kim must go into battle



against cat/creature Ko. Atmospheric sets, tense camerawork, and a good cast make this one shine brightly.  
(Hong Kong)

#### NINE DEMONS (1983)

director: Ng Wu Fu

\*\*\*½

A youthful warrior "sells his soul to the devil" in exchange for power and fighting skills. He is protected by a necklace consisting of nine miniature skulls. When in battle, these skulls become "demon children" who cannibalize the opponent in a bloody frenzy. Soon the warrior finds that he cannot control the heightening mad lust of the children.

This leads to a final (and unsatisfying, thus the hesitant rating) confrontation.  
(Hong Kong)

#### NINJA VAMPIRE BUSTER (1989)

director: Norman Law/Stanley Slu

\*\*\*½

Forget the first hour. Fast forward. Arrive late. Whatever. Just don't sit through the lame story of a Chinese vase containing the remains of a vampire. It's all very familiar.

But the final half-hour of blood-letting and gore-mania inside a hospital is remarkable. Maybe the "dual director" credit (and the bogus title) suggests two different movies here. Perhaps.  
(Hong Kong)

#### NOCTURNAL DEMON (1991)

director: Ricky Lau

\*\* (\*\*\*½)

Ignore Moon Lee's goofy haircut (why, Moon, why?). Forget all the nonsense in the middle of this film dealing with her dumb-as-a-rock cousin. And concentrate on the *real* plot.

The *Nocturnal Demon* is a brutal killer, slashing his way through countless ladies, cutting out their tongues and feeding the gristle to his pet fish. After killing her best friend, he focuses his bloodthirsty assault on Lee and her family.  
(Hong Kong)

#### OBSESSED (1983)

director: Henry Ohan

\*\*

A fireman is possessed by dead, burnt corpse of a woman he tried to rescue.

The lead is played by infamous Hong Kong transvestite, Eddie Chan; it's somewhat interesting and

fitting to watch him play a man possessed by a female spirit.  
(Hong Kong)

#### OCCUPANT (1986)

director: Ronny Yu

\*\*\*

The spirit of a dead singer takes over another girl's body in order to solve the murder. Good FX and camera work elevate this one above other Oriental fare with a similar theme. similar theme.

Primarily, it's significant for the superb acting of Sally Yeh in a pivotal role. Chow Yun-Fat stars as her boyfriend (they would later be reunited in 1989's *The Killer*). Cameraman/filmmaker Raymond Wong makes a rare screen appearance as a nerdy relator also in love with Sally.  
(Hong Kong)



✎ director Ronnie Yu

✎ director John Woo



**ONCE A THIEF (1991)**

director: John Woo

\*\*\*½

**ONCE A THIEF 2 (1991)**

director: John Woo

\*\*\*

Although filmmaker John Woo directed this movie after obtaining his "ultra-violent" notoriety (with the epics like *The Killer*, *A Better Tomorrow*, *A Bullet In The Head*, etc.), this production more closely resembles his earlier, light-comedy entries. Except for a thrilling, explosive, gun-cracking conclusion, there are no other compromises to his current habitude of action-oriented filmmaking.

But more specifically, this tale of "charming thieves operating out of the French Riviera" could easily be the bastard step-child of the Alfred Hitchcock romantic thrillers from the mid-50s.

A good cast (Chow Yun-Fat, Leslie Cheung and Cherie Cheung) helps pass the time quickly. The same cast (without Chow) reunites for Woo's sequel, *Once A Thief 2*.

(Hong Kong)

**ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA (1991)**

director: Tsui Hark

\*\*\*½

A sprawling epic (140+ minutes!) of love and romance, chivalry and betrayal (plus some piracy on the high seas) as famed director Tsui Hark recreates a convincing portrayal of turn-of-the-century China and vividly chronicles the country's advance into the 20th century.

His two lead characters symbolize the turmoil of China itself. On one hand, there's the uneducated-but-intelligent, self-employed merchant (played with charming innocence by mainland star Lo Xiang-Lu) and then, on the other hand, is his fiery lover (Chu Ling), a worldly, foreign-groomed aristocrat. Their "union" is central to the film, and represents the country's ongoing political struggle.

The biggest problem with the motion picture (by Western standards anyway) is its underlying attitude. Unfortunately, there's an assumption that the viewer already has some detailed knowledge of Chinese history, thus much of the concatenation in this lengthy production is lost on the casual viewer. (Hong Kong)

**OPERATION PINK SQUAD (1986)**

director: Jeff Lau

\*\*\*

**OPERATION PINK SQUAD 2:****THE HAUNTED TOWER (1988)**

director: Jeff Lau

\*\*\*\*

Obviously influenced by the *Angel* series also released in 1986, the original *Operation Pink Squad* is a fastpaced action/adventure film, featuring beautiful girls with machine guns. But unfortunately the plot is merely a routine stuff. For the sequel, director Jeff Lau takes the girls, puts them into a horror motif and adds a touch of humor. The result is a prominent excursion into the outlandishly bizarre.

Especially enthralling is an awesome villainess who has the power to disjoin her head from her body. As her body continues to chase *Pink Squad* through the corridors of the haunted castle, her head zooms at breakneck (pardon the pun) speed chomping, biting and nipping at everything in its path. The *Squad* then uses miniature helicopters to chase it and (in scenes reminiscent of the "ball" in *Phantasm*) the copters eventually surround the head; however she chooses to self-destruct in an amazing explosion of blood and gore. And the FX are so good that one almost believes it all.

There's lots more, including legions of "Living Dead-type" zombies and four Kung Fu mystics who arrive through a "door to heaven." These priests, armed only "with the power of musical instruments," go into battle against the creatures and (like an MTV video) kill them with music. This film is a must see extravaganza.

(Hong Kong)

**OUIJA SEXORCISM (1988)**

director: T. Q. X. Lam

\*

Utterly tasteless. A household is possessed by the *sex-spirit* of an ouija board in this shot-on-video atrocity. The "ultimate shock" scene features a woman being "violated" by a snake. In reality, it's an obvious RUBBER snake, and the FX people have a devil-of-a-time getting it *inside* the poor struggling actress. You'd get more enjoyment from banging your head on the table.

(Hong Kong)

**OUR NEIGHBORS ARE PHANTOMS**

director: William Chang (1989)

\*\*\*

Obviously, this one was inspired by the luke-warm USA hit, *The 'Burbs*. But, irregardless of its cloned appearance, this film is much more satisfying than the American counterpart.

After being trapped inside a photograph for 60 years, an evil ghost family finally escapes. They take over a house in the suburbs, and use it as their headquarters (while they collect the souls of 49 humans, in an attempt to regain eternal life). A brave, but inept, off-duty cop gets suspicious and rallies the neighborhood.

The cast and crew are identical to *Ghostly Vixen*, which was probably shot simultaneously. (Hong Kong)

#### PAINTED FACES (1987)

director: Alex Law

\*\*\*

Not a horror film. Perhaps, not even an exploitation film. It's a fascinating docu-drama of the Peking Opera youth school. Some of the exercise techniques are amazing and the strict disciplinary tactics most shocking. (South East China)

#### PEACOCK KING (1988)

director: Nam Nai-Choi

\*\*\*\*

Unexpected things constantly happen (a high compliment indeed) in this story about Hell Virgin and her attempts to take over the world. There's hi-tech stop-motion animation, plus dragons, black magic, bitch queens, zooming fireballs, and the hero *Peacock King*. It's a bewitching delight. For the sequel, see *Saga Of The Phoenix*.

(Hong Kong)

#### PEACOCK PRINCESS (1985)

director: Zeng Xiao/Zu Jingming

\*\*

Bearing no relationship to the popular *Peacock King* series, this oddity comes from mainland China, Red China to be more exact. It tells the story of a corrupt emperor, his bigoted philosophies, and the princess (Li Xiuming) who convinces him to change his evil ways.

The highpoint of the film is the well-choreographed traditional dance sequences.

(China)

#### PHANTOM KILLER (1985)

director: Feng Tsui Fan

\*

Nothing unusual here. It's a standard Police "thriller" about a murderer who never leaves any clues except petals from a flower. A bloodless, shockless bore. Comatose stuff.

(Hong Kong)

#### PHANTOM WAR (1991)

director: Cindy Chow/Simon Yeung

\*\*\*

After the war, a Vietnamese couple moves to England where they learn to fight a new battle against racism, poverty, and (ultimately) the Chinatown mafia.

(Hong Kong/Viet Nam)



Venus Lin, the Golden Queen (aka Lin Ching Hsia)

#### PHOENIX THE RAIDER (1985)

director: Ulysses Au-Yueng

\*\*

The two lead stars from *Golden Queen Commando*/Pink Force *Commando*, Venus Lin (aka Lin Ching Hsia) and Elsa Yeung, are together again, this time, in a more traditional Hong Kong police/action thriller. Despite the on-screen dynamics of the two leading beauties, the result is a decidedly routine (and highly predictable) story of two friends on the opposite sides of the law.

(Hong Kong)

#### PHOENIX: WOLF NINJA

aka *MIRACULOUS FLOWER* (1984)

director: Sze Ma Peng

\*\*\*\*

This is the third in **Chang Ling's Wolf Devil Woman** series (loosely and distantly related). There are evil warlords and witches, magic spells and swords in this film about a beautiful female warrior and her journey through ancient China.  
(Hong Kong)

**PINK FORCE COMMANDO (1985)**

director: Lawrence Full

\*\*\*\*

This sort-of-a-sequel to **Golden Queen Commando** finds all the original cast members (including **Venus Lin** (Lin Ching Hsia), **Elsa Yeung**, and **Sally Yeh**) in a new plot.

Venus betrays her gang (for a man, no less!). She regains their respect by chopping off her arm, replacing it with a Gatling gun. Really.

The action is swift and (like **Golden Queen Commando**) very reminiscent of the violent Italian Spaghetti Westerns. This strange hybrid even has a mysterious dressed-in-black bounty hunter who helps the girls during their final assault against an overwhelming attacking army (in an obvious parallel to America's *alamo* legend).  
(Hong Kong)

**PINK ROSE (1990)**

director: Yuen Chien-Feng

\*

A disappointing girl-gangster ripoff; the climatic "revenge" ending is even lame when compared to below average films of this ilk like **Tiger Cage**.  
(Hong Kong)

**POLICE STORY 1 (1987)**

director: Jackie Chan

\*\*\*



**POLICE STORY 2 (1988)**

director: Jackie Chan

\*\*\*\*

In #1, Jackie is a cop assigned to protect beautiful **Brigitte Lin**. She's the Prosecution's key witness in a gangland trial, however she's also a reluctant and ungrateful ward. (How many times have we seen this plot device used?) The story may be worn, but the stunts are great. Plus, there's lots of action.

However, I have a problem with Chan's corn-ball humor. Why does he constantly disrupt the flow of his films with emasculating slapstick? In short, after performing a death-defying stunt, why does he feel the need to act so goofy? His irritating "mugging for the camera" distracts from his amazing ability.

Fortunately, there is less of his "humor" in #2. And so, this film emerges as (perhaps) his best action movie. The plot is almost non-existent (something about gangsters manufacturing explosives) but, it's a non-stop roller-coaster ride, featuring some of the most amazing sequences ever put on film. This one is a great introduction to the **Jackie Chan** genre.  
(Hong Kong)

**POSSESSED (1985)**

director: David Lai

\*\*

An inner city motif mixed with folk superstitions plus "old dark house" stuff. Sort of fun. (Hong Kong)

**POSSESSED 2 (1990)**

director: David Lai

\*\*\*½

Not truly a sequel, thank God. This one really delivers with lots of action and grisly monsters. One of the better Hong Kong horror films. Don't ignore it because of the **Part #2** status.  
(Hong Kong)

**PREGNANT BY A GHOST (1975)**

director: Rom Bunnag

\*\*

Rosemary Baby rip off, notable only because of rather explicit sex scenes depicting the demonic impregnation.  
(Thailand)

**PRETTY WOMEN AT WAR (1990)**

director: Yang Ching Bong

\*\*½

Four Hong Kong beauties are forced into prostitution after being arrested and put into the custody of a rich politician. They are tortured (similar to Yang's **Searching For Love**) but manage to escape. They take refuge in home of a female freedom fighter who teaches them urban warfare. This all sounds much better than it really is, but the girls look great.  
(Hong Kong)

**PRINCE OF THE SUN (1990)**

director: Hwa I Hu

\*\*

**Lam Ching Ying**, the *Mr Vampire* hero, is Kentum, a monk trying to protect the Young Chieftan (the reincarnated spirit of the Living Buddha).

The beginning and end are loaded with exciting, fantasy-oriented action sequences. But the entire middle is snail-racing time.  
(Hong Kong)



**RAINING NIGHT'S KILLER** (1986)

director: Chen Ching Lo

\*\*\*

A good suspense story about a serial killer loose in the city, but he only strikes when it rains. Graphic and very chilling.  
(Hong Kong)

**RAPE AND DIE** (1987)

director: Lionel Ko Cheung

\*

Good exploitative title, but not much of a movie. A girl runs away from home after her mother's pimp-of-a-boyfriend tries to rape her. There's also an interwoven alternate story (a unique *multiple choice* approach to filmmaking) about the mob and a missing suitcase of jewels.  
(Hong Kong)

**RECORD OF BLOOD** (1986)

director: Tsang Chung Chiang

\*

This Hong Kong equivalent to *Death Faces* (you know, the horrible American let's-make-a-quick-buck *Faces Of Death* ripoff) is a "shockumentary" filled with out-of-focus newsreels of executions and war crimes, plus a lame feature about drug trafficking thru Thailand. Don't get suckered.  
(Hong Kong)

**RED AND BLACK** (1986)

director: Andrew Kam Yuen Wah

\*\*½

Here's an unusual (and unlikely) amalgamation of a parasite-vampire motif in a politically motivated war saga, deeply saturated with propaganda overtones.

In 1941, during the Japanese occupation of mainland China, a man is infected by a Jap vampire soldier. He manages to climb into an underground cavern where he impales himself on a wooden stake. 25 years later, after the Mao Communist Revolution, he's inadvertently resurrected by his unsuspecting son and returns to "life" long enough to infect the People's leader.

The concept is unique, but the execution is tediously slow.

(China)

**RED SPELL SPELLS RED** (1983)

director: He Yong Lin

\*\*\*

Mayhem in Borneo! Exorcism! Possessed natives! Explorers discover images of devils on film when they return from the jungles, so they go back to take a closer look. The ending pays off.

But (fair warning) similar to the Italian *Cannibal* films, there's lots of "mondo" footage in this gross out flick.

(Hong Kong)

**RENEGADE ROBO NINJA & PRINCESS SAKI**

aka **WARLORD** (1991)

director: Kenta Amayita

\*\*\*\*

Wow! Does it get any better than this? Shiranui is an "invincible" robot ninja created by an evil scientist from outer space named Karenei.

But, slowly the Earth's cosmic rays are destroying the cyborg's artificial memory block. He is beginning to remember bits-and-pieces of a previous human life. And so, he starts plotting against his extraterrestrial creator.

Meanwhile, Dr. Karenei (who looks like a cross between *Ming the Merciless* and a giant spider) is informed that the *Supreme Ruler Of The Galaxy* is heading for Earth, in dire need of a "mortal transfusion."

This news cause Karenei's monstrously ugly warlord/assistant to ask the mystifying question: "How will the human flesh inside the *Tree Of Life* enter into the body of our emperor?" The answer, says Karenei, is simple (?): "Through the soul of Princess Saki," a feisty leader whom he has recently kidnapped from the Earth rebel forces.

Shiranui, the notorious renegade robo ninja, together with a macho Japanese samurai (Suwabe)

embark on a mission to rescue the Princess and destroy the alien fortress before the essential "life operation" can take place.

Produced by Namco (PacMan people), the FX are terrific and the story is so "off-center" that it's enormously endearing.  
(Japan/Hong Kong)

#### RETREAT OF THE GODFATHER (1990)

director: Chen Chi Hwa

..

Kwong (prolific Wu Ma aka Ng Ma Wu) is a mafia king. When a rival gang steals a rare Chinese artifact from him, he blames his two "bag-men" and he threatens to "cut their life" if they don't recover the treasure. They do. But then they double-cross him in a bloody gunbattle at the film's predictable conclusion.

Even though it seems that Wu Ma appears in 2-out-of-3 Hong Kong films, I still have a very difficult time taking him serious. He's been the butt of too many jokes in too many comedies; I just don't find him threatening enough to play a mafia boss. It's the same problem I had with his performance in Johnny Woo's *Just Heroes*.  
(Hong Kong)



#### RETURN OF THE DEMON (1985)

director: Wong Ying

\*\*\*½

An episodic horror yarn that effectively mixes terror and comedy. This film is very similar to the early USA "Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein." A guilty pleasure.  
(Hong Kong)

#### RETURN ENGAGEMENT (1991)

director: Cheung Tung Joe

..

Yet another John Woo wanna-be film. But unfortunately this director forgot to include likable

characters. Much of the running time is hopelessly lost on a mafia boss trying to find his missing son. The final shoot-out is bloody but boring. It's time for something new.

(Hong Kong)

#### RETURN OF THE EVIL FOX (1989)

director: Richard Chung

\*\*\*½

The *Evil Fox* is a beautiful villainess with powerful claws. And matching super powers. She has crossed through time and is ready to take revenge against the Maosan family for their generations of past heroics.

With a look and style similar to his *Night Evil Soul*, director Richard Chung makes his meager budget sparkle like a million dollars. Plus, there's a cast of likable characters and some innovative scare sequences.

(Hong Kong)

#### REVENGE FOR A RAPE

aka LADY AVENGER (1987)

director: Yang Chia-Yun

\*\*\*

Imagine the plot of *Lipstick* with the sleaziness of *MS .45* and the result is this movie. Worth a look.  
(Hong Kong)

#### REVENGE OF ANGEL (1991)

director: Yeung Kuen

\*\*\*

What a bizarre situation this is! Moon Lee, the actress who became popular by starring in the action-oriented *Angel* series, this time plays a ghost bent-on-revenge named *Angel*.

Early in the film, she is killed during a scuffle caused by a belligerent suitor. Twenty years later her spirit returns and convinces a young man to avenge her death.

Although the plot is nothing new, the relatively high rating is based on stunning visuals and extraordinary cinematography. And, of course, the always welcome Moon Lee.

(Hong Kong)

#### REVENGE OF THE GHOST (1981)

director: Lee Yoo Sub

\*\*\*½

Combination mad-plastic surgeon and vengeful ghost story, plus a Jack The Ripper type killer. None of it fits together very well, but it's fun to watch.

(Korean)

**REVENGE OF THE NINJA (1988)**

director: Ratno Timoer

\*\*\*

Ignore the misleading title. This is a good, contemporary action/horror film starring Barry Prima (see *The Warrior* series), with lots of over-the-top Hindu/Indo China blood and gore. Twice, beating hearts are ripped from hapless victims. Plus, for those of you who are beginning to experience *zombie-withdrawal symptoms*, this movie also features a legion of living dead (Lucio Fulci style).

The ghost of a powerful Kung Fu master takes possession of a young woman named Mya. He forces her to wear a sacred red necklace. A renegade motorcycle gang tries to steal the necklace but Mya's boyfriend Ricky (popular Barry Prima) protects her. Eventually the Mad Max-esque gang recruits an evil magician to help them. (Hindu/Malasia/Indo China)

**REVERSED ENEMY**

(1982)

director: Lee Hyuk Soo

\*

An ugly spirit with an enormous red tongue battles an avenging daughter. A couple chuckles, not much else. (Hong Kong)

**RIGHTING WRONGS (1987)**

director: Corey Yuen

\*\*\*

From the very beginning, when the hero belligerently shoots a car's gas tank while the bad guys are desperately trying to claw their way out, there's no doubt that this guy really means business.

Yes, it takes an unconventional hero to catch today's "uncompromising, hard-boiled" criminal. And this movie is filled with nasty villains who do terrible things, like dynamiting a room full of children. However the unique (and yes, surprising) aspect of the film is that this vengeance-seeking, gun-wielding hero is a lawyer. Definitely, he has an intractable way of "settling out of court." (Hong Kong)

**ROBOFORCE**

aka I LOVE MARIA (1988)

director: Wong Che Keung with Tsui Hark

\*\*\*\*

Nonstop action with giant robots and an evil villainess, Maria (Sally Yeh).

The camera work is extraordinary in this aggressive film. But, over all, it's a rare mixture of Oriental horror and SciFi, with an infectious musical soundtrack and well-written characters. The results are stunning. Producer Tsui Hark co-stars.

(Hong Kong)

**ROBOTRIX (1991)**

director: Simon Yun Ching

\*\*\*\*

"Combining human thoughts with a robot's computer program," a scientist muses, "that could have serious repercussions."

"Why?" a reporter asks.

"Because you can't control a robot with a human brain."

And so, with that bit of obvious fore-shadowing, the film begins. Since thoughts can only be transferred at the moment of death (gosh, everybody knows that, right?) the evil master criminal Ryuichi kills himself and becomes immortalized inside his robotic creation.

Meanwhile, in *RoboCop* fashion, after a police-woman (former X-porn star Amy Yip) is fatally wounded, her brain is drained into a fighting female robot.

There's lots of action, nudity, soft-core sex, and tongue-in-cheek fun.

(Hong Kong)

**ROUGE (1987)**

director: Stanley Kwan

\*\*\*

A contemporary ghost story with *historically* romantic overtones. It's a stunning, well-written story of a ghostly beauty (singer Anita Mui) who, after many years of searching, reunites with her love-mate (Leslie Cheung).

Basically it's a bittersweet story, reminiscent of *Dream Lovers*, with an efficacious movie-within-a-movie theme.

(Hong Kong)

**SAGA OF THE PHOENIX (1990)**

director: Nam Nai-Choi

\*\*

Yuen Biao is back as Peacock (see *Peacock King* for Part One). But this time, he is frozen in an "ice cage" by the *Hell Virgin* during the early part of the film and not thawed out until the final reel. In between, the movie seriously gets off track.

The lion's share is wasted on the juvenile exploits of Genie, a furry sickening-sweet muppet. Who needs this shit?

Lots of money down the drain (or the sand whirlpool) this time. Watch the original instead. ('Hong Kong)

#### SAVIOR (1984)

director: Ronny Yu

\*\*\*\*

A Dirty Harry clone directed with style and vigor by filmmaker vet, Ronny Yu (also see Trall and Occupant). Inspector Tom Chu is a maverick cop looking for a psycho "sex slayer," a pervert who enjoys slicing up prostitutes.



Young Paul Kwok had watched as his mother slit her throat with a razor blade. Her last words to him were: "Women are tramps. Tramps took your daddy. And now tramps killed your mummy." Years later, with his brain twisted in complete madness, Paul Kwok is on the streets chopping up the ladies of the night.

And Inspector Tom loses a partner trying to stop him.

(Hong Kong)

#### SCARE THE LIVING (1991)

director: Xen Chu-Lung

\*\*\*

In ancient China, a young woman is beheaded for practicing sorcery. Years later her mummified torso is unearthed during an excavation project. Mystically, she is re-animated and begins a search for her missing head. Surprisingly, it's not as stupid as it sounds. Well, maybe it's just a little stupid, but it looks real good.

Anyway, the head has taken possession of an attractive girl who is "eliminating" ancestors of the men who initially convicted her.

(Hong Kong)

#### SCARED STIFF (1988)

director: Donny Yu

\*

This film tries to "touch all the bases," with elements of horror, fantasy, comedy, action, suspense and even some (yawn) drama. The result is an unsettling hod-pog that resembles peanut butter on a pizza. Even Chow Yun-Fat in a small role as the villain can't save it.

(Hong Kong)

#### SEA WOLVES (1990)

director: Cheng Siu Keung

\*\*\*½

A cop/action movie that benefits from an unusually intelligent script, somewhat of a rarity in HK ultra-violent films. Plus, it features two of Asia's biggest stars: Simon Yam (who initially received notoriety as the Eurasian hitman in *Bullet In The Head*) and fiery beauty Cynthia Khan (best known for her sumptuously excessive series *In The Line Of Duty*).

Drug smugglers are using refugee ships from Viet Nam to transport their illegal shipments. A band of modern-day pirates intercept the junk-boats, robbing and killing everyone. The HK Royal Police try to stop it all.

(Hong Kong)

#### SEARCHING FOR LOVE (1987)

director: Yang Ching Bong

\*\*\*

It's sleazy. It's rough. It's recommended.

A woman (Marla Jo) is looking for her long-lost father. She eventually finds him. But first, she is kidnapped, inducted into a slavery ring, tortured and raped...yes, she finally does find him. It turns out that he is the madman running the slave smuggling racket! How's that for trashy?

(Hong Kong)

#### SEEDING OF A GHOST (1984)

director: Yang Chuan

\*\*\*\*

God love those Shaw Brothers! Ultimately, they were the "production team" responsible for opening the floodgates, paving the way, for the "explicit shock" Hong Kong horror films of the mid-to-late '80s (mostly because of their highly successful gory *Black Magic/Revenge Of The Zombies* classics).

This film, *Seeding Of A Ghost*, was originally designed as the third entry in the *Black Magic* trilogy, but censorship problems plagued the production, resulting in a less-than-enthusiastic



distribution. However, the uncut version of this film, in many ways, surpasses its predecessors, especially on the *gross-out* level. And in the gratuitous nudity department.

A taxi driver is suspected of murdering his unfaithful wife, Irene. But, actually, she'd been raped and killed by a pair of delinquent psychos, who attacked her as she was returning home from an adulterous affair with her lover. Frustrated, the husband (**Ti Yung**) contacts a warlock who agrees to level a lethal curse against everybody remotely responsible for Irene's death.

The result is a relentless barrage of vengeance, graphically administered. Victims upchuck worms. Body parts explode. In short, there's an absolutely amazing amount of blood spilled, sprayed, and splattered...making this movie the zenith, the apex, the very *top* in the Asian "repulsive" gore category. In other words, it doesn't get any better than this. (Hong Kong)

#### SEVENTH CURSE (1986)

director: Lan Del Tsa

\*\*\*\*

While a group of explorers are on an expedition in the jungles of Thailand, an anthropologist stumbles upon the bizarre ritualistic ceremony of the *Worm Tribe*. A beautiful girl is tied to an altar and is being sacrificed to a creature that looks like "Alien."

The explorer saves her, only to be captured himself by the Witch Doctor. Helplessly, the unfortunate anthropologist watches as a professor/friend is anointed with a strange gunk that causes the body to convulse and explode in a shower of worms and other slithering creatures. Then the Witch Doctor snatches up the eyeball of the ruined friend and forces it down the throat of the explorer.

Immediately (of course), the hero's body is infected with erupting painful blood boils. However, he does manage to escape, and his physical malfunction

is reversed when the girl cuts off her nipple (!) and feeds it to him. But (perhaps the most amazing), all this takes place in the first half hour!

Next, it's one incredible scene after another. There are magic spells using blood of black dogs and black sheep, and others using the blood of freshly slaughtered children from a nearby tribe! There are small *Alien* creatures that burrow into the victim's chest and out the other side! plus a large *Alien* creature (called Old Ancestor) that rips the head off the victim and drinks blood from the stump!

Also, as an extra bonus, this movie features **Chow Yun-Fat** (the cool star of *The Killer* and *A Better Tomorrow*) in one of his early roles. Don't miss it. (Hong Kong)

#### SHE SHASHOU (1981)

director: Xiao Gul

\*

A young boy befriends rats in this Oriental Willard ripoff. But where's the Michael Jackson theme song? **Ben, Ben....** (Hong Kong)

#### SHE SHOOTS STRAIGHT (1991)

director: Corey Yuen

\*\*\*

This film is little more than a showcase for action star **Joyce Godenzi** (the Anglo/Chinese firecracker



the "Old Ancestor" from *Seventh Curse*

from *Eastern Condors*). And, as such, it's loads of fun. The incidental plot deals with a female cop (Godenzi) and her fight against the mafia Triad (headed by Iceman Cometh villain, Yuen Wah) while she tries to keep her marriage intact. Tony Leung stars as her enervated cop husband. (Hong Kong)

# SHOCKING! (1987)

director: Fong Ho

\*\*\*

An old-dark-house motif with *Amityville Horror* theme, as a reporter and his family move to "a haunted house" in the country. The ending is a major disappointment. You'll feel cheated. (Hong Kong)

# SNAKE GIRL DROPS IN (1986)

director: Lew Ting-Lu

\*\*\*½

An Oriental jungle girl movie, features beautiful snake girl who wears a Tina Turner wig to cover a nest of live snakes (!?!); whether these snakes are actually part of her scalp is never explained. Anyway, she freely joins a group of explorers and returns with them to civilization (which, by the way, appears to be only a few miles away).

Some incredible moments (eating a live frog, watering her "snake" hair in a mens room urinal) but mostly it's scantily clad snake girl against the evil gangsters.

Isn't that enough?

(Hong Kong)



directors Dennis Yu (*Sketch Of A Psycho*), Ronnie Yu (*The Savio*), and Philip Chan (*Night Caller*) (L-R)  
Initially worked together in a production company called Film Force, they disbanded to follow separate careers

# SKETCH OF A PSYCHO (1990)

director: Dennis Yu

\*\*\*

The director of *Evil Cat* and *Imp* creates a scary, killer-on-the-roam, slasher movie punctuated by unnerving, extreme close-ups (similar in style to many of the great Italian thrillers). (Hong Kong)

# SLEAZY DIZZY (1991)

director: Raymond Sen

\*½

It's the *Angel* motif played mostly for laughs. Despite an ultra-violent beginning and end, this story of a female cop and her two less-than-honest friends is mostly a collection of lame sight gags. What a waste. (Hong Kong)

# SOUTH SEAS BLOOD LETTER (1984)

director: Tsai Ku/Chou Ming-Hung

\*\*\*

The Viet Nam war is "over." A group of persecuted Vietnamese refugees manage to evade the military police and escape the country via a small shipping vessel destined for Hong Kong.

Before long, they are lost in the ocean. And soon they run out of food and water. Some die, but others survive by drinking urine, until they shipwreck on a deserted island.

Their total existence is reduced to a simple, basic craving for food. For example, when they find a snake, the group goes wild in a "feeding frenzy," tearing the serpent apart and devouring the still-moving pieces.

Eventually, their blood mania escalates into a crazed cannibalistic delirium culminating with

consumption of a young child, followed by mass suicide. An unsettling film, due mostly to its relentless trek into absolute gross-out bleakness. How far should a film go? An old question. But in light of viewing this movie, it's a poignant question.

Difficult to recommend; impossible to forget.  
(Hong Kong/Viet Nam)

#### SPIRIT VS. ZOMBI (1989)

director: Yao Fenpan

\*\*

This should actually be called "The Priest Vs. The Vampire" because there are no spirits or zombies in the film. Instead it's the story of a vampire father and young son who are resurrected in modern Taiwan.

Mostly, the film plays on sympathy as these two "strangers in a strange land" are separated from each other (ala *American Tale* type sentimentality). Regardless of the otherwise maudlin script, the ending comes as a complete surprise when the father is blown to smithereens and the shocked, forlorn young child walks off into the fog. Alone.  
(Taiwan/Hong Kong)

#### SPIRITUAL LOVE (1985)

director: David Lai

\*\*

The title does not refer to platonic love, rather this is a fairly interesting tale of a triangle between a man, his wife and the ghost of his dead girl friend. Chow Yun Fat stars.

(Hong Kong)

#### SPIRITUAL MARTIAL (1979)

director: Ahmad Sean Sulong

\*\*

A South East Asian/Malaysian mondo shock-umentary depicting the various aspects of "SM" (in this case "SM" means Spiritual Martial Arts, but it could easily stand for Sado/Masochism), concentrating mostly on beatings, whippings, self-flagellation, and various other pain endurance tests. For about a half hour, it's interesting.

(Malaysia)

#### SPLIT OF THE SPIRIT (1987)

director: Fred Tan

\*\*\*½

Pretty Pauline Wong is a famous choreographer possessed by the avenging spirit of a dead girl, killed by her playboy lover. There are some imaginative slayings as Pauline stalks and eliminates everybody connected with the cursed death.



Incidentally, the name *Split Of The Spirit* comes from the title of Pauline's play which, coincidentally, is about a tormented girl with a split personality. The tie between "real life" and "stage life" results in an interesting twist during the surprise conclusion.  
(Hong Kong)

#### SPOOKY FAMILY (1989)

director: Law Lit

\*\*\*

#### SPOOKY FAMILY 2 (1991)

director: Law Lit

\*\*\*

In the tradition of the *Mr Vampire* series (from the creators of the same), this one is filled with non-stop horror action, some of it deeply rooted in Chinese ghost-mythology, thus, very strange by Anglo standards. A combination of gross terror with eye-popping FX, silly slapstick and even some adult humor make the film a balls-to-the-wall fun time. Plus there's even an *Adam's Family* ripoff theme song.

A band of unscrupulous magicians revive the "Copper Vampire" (the most evil creature to ever live) by mixing their tainted blood with that of the creature. Master Chu Kar, ghost hunter extraordinaire, is hired to fight the monster. He is aided by his odd family, plus a ghost servant and the spirit of his former girlfriend.

The chief magician, Yam Ling (one-eyebrow priest from the *Mr Vampire* series), joins the cast for zany horrific activities in #2. But it's almost overkill.

(Hong Kong)

#### SPOOKY! SPOOKY! (1986)

director: Lo Wei Don

\*\*\*

The beach is closed. Oh No! cry the teenagers. But even worse: some disobedient swimmers are turning up dead. Is it "Red Tide?" the teens ask. Has the Blue Monster returned?

No. It all has to do with an ancient curse, and now the lake is haunted. When a pretty girl is sucked into the water, she returns "from Hell" as a superpowerful sex ghost. There are further exploits involving skeletons in quicksand, electrically charged fish creatures, *Evil Dead* type zombies, plus attacks by severed heads and severed hands.

In a highly controversial segment the severed hand crawls into the police chief's pants and masturbates him.

(Hong Kong)

#### STONE AGE WARRIORS (1990)

director: Stanley Tong

\*\*\*\*

Whew! Similar to the Italian Cannibal movies, this one tells the story of beautiful Eko Lee (Elaine Lui, striking recluse star of *Angel 1* and *2*), who journeys into the New Guinea jungles to find her missing father.

Joined by an equally gorgeous insurance investigator, Lucy (Nina Li-Chi from *Tiger On The Beat*) and a guide, Abdula (*Devil Sabah*), Carey goes deep into the *Emerald Forests*. The result is a violent, breathtaking adventure that ranks as one of the best Asian exploitation films.

(Hong Kong)

#### STORY OF A GUN (1991)

director: Wong C. Keung

\*\*

It probably seemed like a good idea on paper. But as a movie, this story of gun-trafficking from China is hopelessly clichéd. The only saving grace is the rousing conclusion.

(Hong Kong)

#### STRANGE DEAD BODIES (1981)

director: Kang Bum Koo

\*\*\*

An Oriental version of *Living Dead At Manchester Morgue*: an insecticide brings the dead back to life, plus it causes premature childbirth. The scenes of the deformed babies being born are very shocking (because it's real), but the zombies aren't as effective due to rather poor makeup.

(Korean)

#### SUMMONS TO DEATH (1984)

director: Lo Wei

\*\*\*\*

This is probably the *coolest* of all the HK films. Cool in the *James Bond* sense. And made even cooler with a great jazz score from Wang Foo-Ling.



It's an odd mixture of espionage, adventure, and melodrama - similar to the Italian ripoffs of the British spy films, but with a decidedly Asian flare, thanks to very stylish direction from actor/writer Lo Wei. And, regardless of the generic *Summons To Death* title, this Shaw Brothers production ranks as one of their best.

A charming rogue, Teng Lei, gets mixed up with gangsters and modern pirates when he becomes involved with the daughter of a crime boss. She convinces him to help locate a buried treasure on a remote (and supposedly uninhabited) island. The caper, more-than-casually, resembles the *Dr. No* adventure.

(Hong Kong)

#### SWORDSMAN (1991)

director: Tsui Hark, Ching Siu Tung, King Hu,

Ann Hui, Lee Wai Man, Kam Y Wah

\*\* (\*\*\*\*)

A valid argument can be made that "too many cooks (or, in this case, directors) spoiled the soup." Parts of this film are extraordinary, but too much of it is needlessly confusing.

Over all, this wanna-be epic suffers from far too many inconsistencies in what should have been a simple straight-forward adventure tale about a young swordsman and his search for a stolen scroll. However, there is some interesting "comic book" violence and a few beautiful women-with-swords to perk your interest from time to time.

(Hong Kong)

#### TALE OF A FEMALE GHOST (1987)

aka HORRIBLE GHOST OF OLD HOUSE

director: Kao Yu

\*

When her coffin is disturbed by grave-robbers, a ghost princess returns to get revenge. But she seems more preoccupied with getting laid.

X-rated sex action with some of the ugliest people ever put on screen in fornicating positions. A good argument for abstinence.

(Hong Kong/Thailand)

**TERRA COTTA WARRIOR (1990)**director: **Ching Siu-Tung**

\*\*\*½

A sprawling, partially historic, action-oriented drama from director **Ching Siu-Tung** (Chinese Ghost Story and Witch From Nepal) telling the story of the emperor's personal swordsman, his "loss of innocence" and quest for power. But ultimately it's about reincarnation. And "true, undying love" spanning thru time.

When the swordsman's girlfriend is executed for sorcery (burned at the stake *ala* Spanish Inquisition style), he travels into the twentieth century to find her wandering spirit. Epic in scope. Cast of thousands.

Too bad the swordsman looks so much like comedian **Pat Paulsen**.

(Hong Kong/China)

**THRILLING BLOODY SWORD (1986)**director: **Chang Shing**

\*\*\*½

An Oriental retelling of the *Snow White* story with a cyclops monster, a couple dragons, an evil warlock, and monkey men thrown in for good measure. It's fun and there's never a dull moment.

(Hong Kong)

**TIGER CAGE (1988)**director: **Yuen Wo Peng**

\*

A tired and tedious "wanna-be" action film about a corrupt, drug trafficking police officer. The gun play won't even keep you awake.

(Hong Kong)

**TIGER ON THE BEAT (1988)**director: **Lau Kar Leung**

\*\*\*\*

**TIGER ON THE BEAT 2 (1990)**director: **Lau Kar Leung**

\*\*\*

**Chow Yun Fat** and Martial Arts boxer **Conan Lee** star as partners in this police thriller. The plot has to do with the search for a drug-lord's killer, but the real reason to watch is the charismatic relationship between the cop buddies. There's also a breath-taking chainsaw battle at the film's finale.

In #2, there's lots of action, car chases and Kung Fu as **Conan Lee** returns. But **Chow Yung Fat** does not. A buddy picture without buddies is a sad thing.

**Danny Lee** tries to take **Chow's** place, but the real excitement is a character called "Sweet Dream" (**Ellen Chan**). This girl drips (perhaps, the wrong choice of words) with sex appeal and she wields a wicked gun too.

(Hong Kong)

**TIL DEATH US DO SCARE (1985)**director: **Lau Kar-wing**

\*\*

This is a horror comedy as the ghosts of three deceased husbands play cupid with the widow.

The conclusion FX are orchestrated by American makeup wizard **Tom Savini**.

(Hong Kong)

**TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL (1981)**director: **John Woo**

\*\*

In this variation of the *Faust* legend, there's an unholy scrimmage between the spirit of a defrocked priest and a "disciple of Satan." They are both fighting over the soul of a mortal who wants to be a pop singer.

Certainly not one of **John (The Killer) Woo's** best. Reportedly, he has said: "The special effects were great, but the drama was hopeless."

(Hong Kong)

**TOOTHLESS VAMPIRES (1987)**director: **Lee Hun Yu**

\*\*\*½

Here's a comedy horror film that works, because much of the humor is very black. The opening (even before credits) is a total blood-bath, shock experience.

The story itself is about a family of vampires that, due to a genetic imbalance, don't have fangs. Their hairbrained schemes of getting blood are shocking and funny. Very dark, but very enjoyable.

(Hong Kong)

**TRAIL (1983)**

director: Ronny Yu

\*\*\*\*

Smugglers use zombies to transport opium (!?) but the authorities begin to investigate. They trace the "zombie trail" back to a pagoda where they discover a vampire running the entire operation.

Veteran filmmaker Ronny Yu (see *Occupant* and *The Savior*) has created not only a peculiar tale (co-written with producer Michael Hui) but also a movie with "classic" good looks. Obviously, much time was invested in this production to recreate the compelling mystical atmosphere. Even though the film is outrageous in *plot*, director Ronny Yu never compromises tradition.

This motion picture remains one of the best examples Asian historonic horror.

(Hong Kong)

**TROUBLE COUPLE (1990)**

director: Ranwood Chen

\*

The only thing worse than a shot-on-video horror film is a shot-on-video action film. You don't need this in your life. None of us do.

**TWILIGHT SIREN (1990)**

director: J. Lon Lung

\*\*

It begins as a rather traditional horror story (with an especially good opening sequence showing motorcyclists being torn apart by a creature or creatures unknown).

Wendy and Jay, while searching for buried artifacts, undercover a skull and "sacred tablet" from the Ming dynasty. Soon, a ghost *emerges* from the skull and solicits their help in finding the rest of her body so that she might become reincarnated. However, the "protector of the gate" (a ferociously powerful female spirit and, apparently, the creature from the opening segment) tries to stop them.

Unfortunately, the entire middle section of this film is ruined with a ridiculously embarrassing subplot about a dimwitted "student-of-mystical-arts" named Tao and his lusty pursuit of Wendy.

(Hong Kong)

**TWO WOMEN FROM NETHERWORLD**

director: Park Yoon Kyo (1982)

\*\*

A raped girl kills herself and returns (with a ghost friend) to take revenge.

(Korean)



Lam Ching Ying, vampire hunter extraordinaire

**ULTIMATE VAMPIRE (1991)**

director: Andrew Lau

\*\*\*

Basically, this is an unofficial sequel to the popular Mr. Vampire series. Lam Ching Ying returns as the "one eye-brow" priest. This time he rescues his loyal student Hsi (Chin Siu Ho), a young man who has fallen in love with a beautiful vampire.

(Hong Kong)

**UNCLE KEN'S ANGELS (1986)**

director: Mason Ching

\*

A very poor *Charlie's Angels* rip off. Forget this one and watch *Killer Angels* or *Angel 2* instead.

(Hong Kong)

**VALLEY OF GHOSTS (1981)**

director: Kim Si Hyun

\*

Ghosts attack rich people (why?) plus something about the relationship between cats and women (didn't know there was one).

(Hong Kong)

**VAMPIRE'S BREAKFAST (1986)**

director: Wong Chun

\*\*

An okay story about a newspaper reporter who stumbles upon a nest of vampires living in contemporary Hong Kong. The police don't believe him (of course) so he sets out to get proof to back his story. The movie is a comedy horror blend with mediocre FX.  
(Hong Kong)

**VAMPIRES LIVE AGAIN (1987)**

director: Kam Yoo Tu

\*

**VAMPIRE STRIKES BACK (1988)**

director: Kam Yoo Tu

\*

These two movies are among the very worst Oriental horror films. There are shot-on-video messes that vacillate between lame terror sequences and embarrassing comedy bits. Somebody should take away Kam Yoo Tu's video camera. The world would be a better place.  
(Hong Kong)

**VAMPIRES SETTLE ON POLICE CAMP (1991)**

director: Lo Wei Lang

\*\*

Another *Haunted Cop Shop* clone that relies more on humor than horror. Even though it's not as bad as *Ghost Mansion*, the plot is remarkably similar. Teenagers, studying to become cops, eventually save the day when the vampires attack.  
(Hong Kong)

**VENGEANCE IS MINE (1988)**

director: Chl Lee

\*\*\*½

A drug-crazed gang of delinquents attack and rape a nurse (Rosamund Kwan) as she is walking home from her hospital. These crazies continue to torment her and her friends (for the entire film) until she finally takes justice into her own hands.

The conclusion is an unparalleled explosion of violence and carnage. White knuckle stuff.  
(Hong Kong)

**VENGEANCE OF SNOW MAIDEN (1982)**

director: Ng Wu Fu

\*

Cool title; lame story with "Ice Princess" overtones about a girl raised in the wilderness by a witch.  
(Hong Kong)

**VENGEFUL VAMPIRE GIRL (1980)**

director: Kim In Soo

\*\*

A raped woman kills herself during the sex act by biting off her tongue, thus bleeding to death. Ten years later she returns as a ghostly vampire to seek revenge.  
(Korea)

**WAR OF THE WIZARDS (1980)**

director: Richard Cann

\*\* (\*\*\*½)

I have mixed feelings about this motion picture. The first half is painfully slow and cumbersome. But the second part is fun and adventurous. Thus, the double rating (see above).

It tells the story of a dreamer named Ty (Charles Lang) who discovers a magic dish, capable of granting him any wish. For the final forty minutes, he is inadvertently transported (via a giant phoenix) to the island lair of an evil, but beautiful, witch (Betty Nunun) where Ty also "meets" her bodyguard giant (played by Richard "Jaws" Kiel) and engages in a wildly choreographed fight sequence.

(Taiwan)

**WAR VICTIMS (1987)**

director: Jon Bierlum

\*\*½

Similar to the Italian *Nazi atrocity/women concentration camp* films, this one relies totally on gritty brutality and sado behavior. "Beat me until I'm dead, but I'm not going to tell you anything!" screams Marissa Haque, a female Malaysian captive of the Japanese army. And those words pretty much sum up the entire motion picture.  
(Hindu/Malasia/Indo China)

**WARRIOR (1985)**

director: Sisworo Putra

\*\*\*

♦  
**WARRIOR 2 (1987)**

director: H Tjut Djalili

\*\*\*\*

♦  
**WARRIOR 3 (1988)**aka **WARRIOR AND BLIND WARRIOR**

director: Worod Suma

\*\*

Barry Prima is Jaka Sembung. These three fantasy/adventure films tell the story of his exploits against the evil dictators.

The movies are competently filmed and fun to watch, but their major contribution is their "balls-to-the-wall" approach to violence. In these Kung Fu fights, people bleed. Gore flows. Lots of it.

The best example is in *Warrior 2* when the villainess actually (literally) gets her face ripped off. Unfortunately, in #3 he is joined by Barta the Blind Warrior (see *Blind Warrior*), probably the most uninteresting hero in Asian cinema. (Hindu/Malasia/Indo China)

**WATCH OUT! (1988)**

director: Tony Leung

\*\*\*

This is a very strange "comedy" that breaks many cultural taboos. Two ghosts fight for possession of the same body. Eventually an agreement is made: Ghost #1 will occupy the body only until he sires a baby; then Ghost #2 will kill him and take over. #1 adopts a homosexual lifestyle to protect himself, but soon he falls in love with (and marries) his maid. When she becomes pregnant, he tells her about the sad eventuality. This leads to completely tasteless segments, wherein the wife tries to "lose" the baby. First, she attempts an abortion, and then tries to trip and fall. She hoodwinks robbers into beating her, and finally pays a judo master to hit her in the stomach. But each time Ghost #2 intervenes. An amazingly repulsive plotline, right? (Hong Kong)

**WE ARE GOING TO EAT YOU (1984)**

director: Tsui Hark

\*\*\*\*

Two hunters are captured and taken to a city populated by cannibals. Lots of blood and gore,



Billy Ling holds a still-beating heart in the bloody finale of *We Are Going To Eat You*



lots of fun too. Plus a very strange mixture of horror and sexual humor. Most of it works.  
(Hong Kong)

**WEDDING DRESS OF THE GHOST** (1981)  
director: Park Yoon Kyo

\*

A man kills a hitchhiker. A month later, while driving home, he runs over her again. Or was it a ghost? Who cares?  
(Korea)

**WHITE HAIR DEVIL LADY** (1985)  
director: Chang Hsin Yin

\*

Obviously inspired by the Pearl Cheong/Chang Lin "Wolf Devil Woman" movies, this film doesn't deserve to be mentioned in the same breath. It's a poorly made, disjointed fantasy flick.  
(Hong Kong)

**WHO'S THE GHOST IN SLEEPY HOLLOW**  
director: Hsu Wen-hsieh (1989)

\*

A young delivery man survives his encounter with spooks in Sleepy Hollow. However, the "ghosts" under the power of a phoney spiritualist invade the city. Cheaply made and very talky. Besides a displaced fart joke, there's not much here.  
(South East Asia/Hong Kong)

**WILD SEARCH** (1990)  
director: Ringo Lam

\*\*\*

Chow Yun-Fat is a cop who confronts a gang of violent Triad psychos. He also finds time to rescue a little girl. And fall in love with her mother.

It's a good looking film from vet Ringo Lam, best known for *City On Fire* and *Espirit D'Amour*.  
(Hong Kong)

**WITCH FROM NEPAL** (1985)  
director: Chen Ching Lo

\*\*\*\*

A terrific 1985 wham/slam horror story with fantasy overtones from competent Chen Ching Lo (director of *Dream Lovers*, *Terra Cotta Warrior*, and the *Chinese Ghost Story* series).

The confrontation with zombies (not hopping ghosts, but rather Italian-esque "living dead") in a cemetery is perhaps the scariest sequence in all Hong Kong terror flicks.

Sheila, the good witch from Nepal (played by Emily Chu), convinces Joe Wong (Chow Yun Fat

in another fervid role) to confront the Devil incarnate, an evil cat-like creature with superhuman strength. Great FX and lots of action. Plus, there's a very erotic love scene in the rain between Chow Yun Fat and the witch. Sizzling fun.  
(Hong Kong)

**WOLF DEVIL WOMAN** (1982)  
director: Chang Ling

In America she's known as Pearl Cheong. Her real name is Chang Ling (director and star). But she IS *Wolf Devil Woman*!

After being raised by wolves, she attacks the Devil and his evil army of Zombies. She can do anything. She can fly. She can swing a mean sword. She can spin around real fast and make her hair turn white. But, here's the most amazing thing she does: when the Devil sets her boyfriend on fire, she douses the flames by biting (yes, biting) her arm and the spurting blood puts out the fire. (!?!)

◆ also:

**WOLF DEVIL WOMAN 2**  
aka VENUS: WOLF NINJA  
aka MATCHING ESCORT (1983)

director: Sze Ma Peng

\*\*\*\*

This is the second in Chang Ling's *Wolf Devil Woman* conceptual series. It's filled with more fun and action as she unleashes her vengeance on the evil (and rainbow hair colored) warlord, plus there's poison spells, walking on water, ghosts, a dethroned good king, and magic mushrooms.

◆ also see:

**PHOENIX: WOLF NINJA,**  
**DARK LADY OF THE BUTTERFLY,**  
**THE HEROIC ONE,**  
**and INVINCIBLE**

**WRONGLY KILLED GIRL** (1988)  
director: Wong Howg Jang

\*\*

It takes a long while for things to heat up in this medieval horror/fantasy tale. Nothing happens in the first 40 minutes.

After that it's swordplay and sorcery. Plus some very pretty female ghosts.  
(Southeast Asia/Taiwan)

**YELLOW EMMANUELLE** (1976)  
director: Albert Thomas/Lee Chang

\*\*

A low budget, Italian/Hong Kong co-production capitalizing on the popularity of the *Emanuelle* name. Chai Lee stars as Dr. Emy Wong and

Giuseppe Pamberti is her new patient/boyfriend. The action is a mild soft-core sex romp.

But, historically, there is something significant about this film. It was the first major movie to play Hong Kong theatres without censored pubic hair shots. Thus, starting a tradition which (to this day) separates Hong Kong sex-cinema from that of it's neighbor, Japan. (Hong Kong)



# **ZU WARRIORS FROM MAGIC MOUNTAIN** director: Tsui Hark (1983)

\*\*\*\*

This is an epic Oriental fantasy movie filled with extraordinary visual delights. It fluctuates effortlessly from outrageous to ascetic. Most every scene ambushes the viewer. This is a perfect introduction to the genre.

And a perfect introduction to the directorial talents of filmmaker **Tsui Hark**. Over the past couple months much has been written about his *saint or devil* status in the Hong Kong production world, but movies like this one solidify his reputation as an adventurous visionary. In many ways, this motion picture set the standard for the countless fantasies films to follow.

(Hong Kong)

克

# **ZOMBIE VS. NINJA** (1987)

director: Charles Lee

A wacky magician/coffinmaker (with phony Jerry Lewis buckteeth and a terrible haircut) rescues a young man beaten by robbers. Both are constantly advised by an Anglo fighter (**Pierre Kirby**) who wears a gold headband with the word *Ninja* across his forehead.

The film has the look of a composite. Perhaps the result of three or four different movies strung together. Take producer **Joseph Lai** to court. Sue him. Except for a brief moment during the opening credits, there's not a zombie to be found. Anywhere. (Hong Kong)



Zu: Warriors From Magic Mountain

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German cherrybomb Evelyn Kraft captivates Hong Kong audiences in the Shaw Brothers amazing *King Kong* clone, *Goliathon* aka *Mighty Peking Man*.

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